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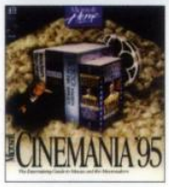

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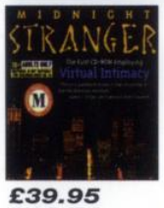

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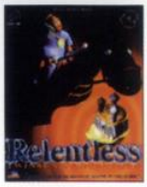

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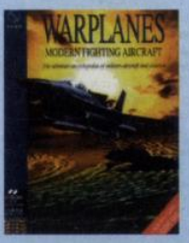

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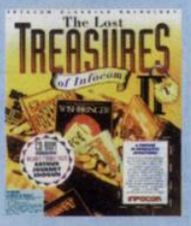

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Korg X5 MIDI keyboard 37
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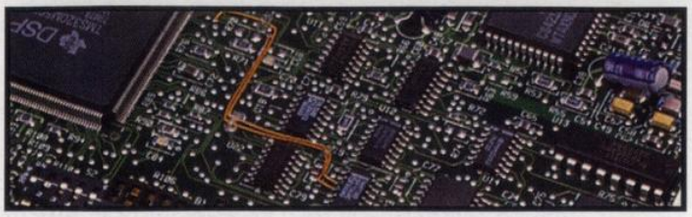

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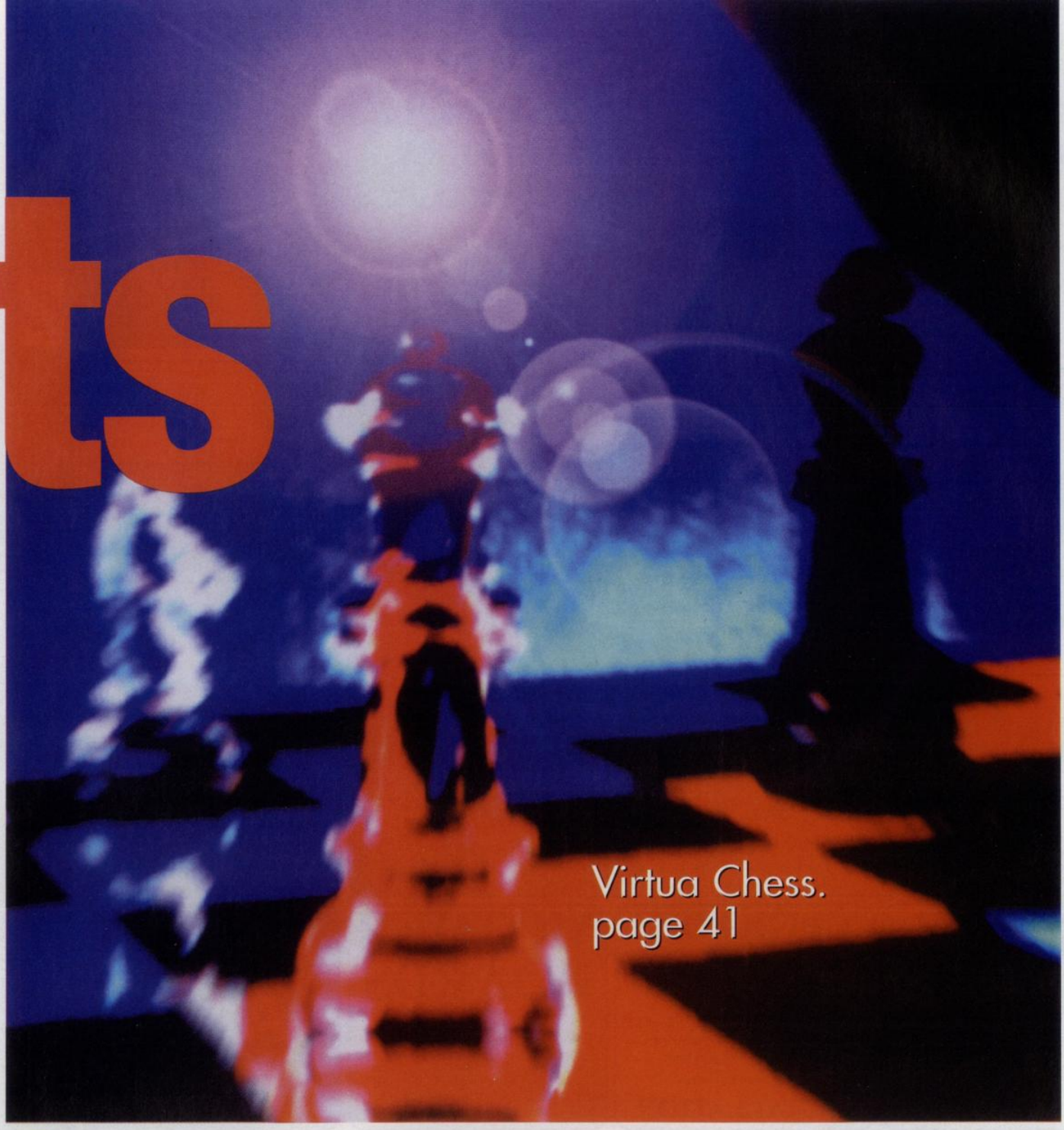

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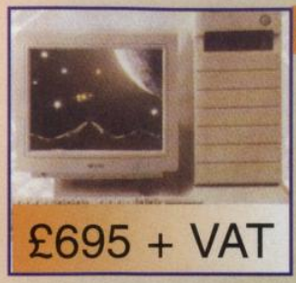

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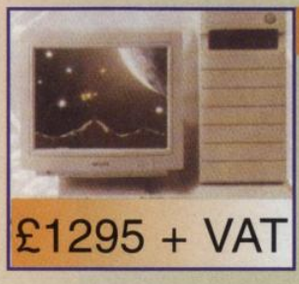
MS-dod 6,2 Windows 3,11(Optional)

£695 + VAT



HARMONY PENTUIUM66MHz

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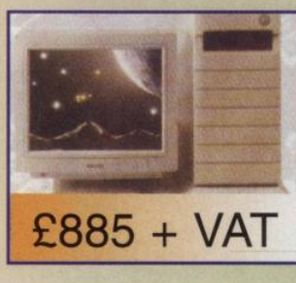

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INSTALLATION

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£305

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4.0 GB (SCSI)	£1200
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Start Here?

It's time for **Paul Mallinson** to stand up and introduce himself. Any objections anyone? (Somebody shut Ged up).

Things have moved pretty quickly for everyone on the *CD-ROM User* team recently and, as Ged mentioned in his editorial last issue, there have been a few changes here too. Positive changes I must add. As you may or may not have noticed there's a new look to this page – more streamlined, sleek and beardless, but just as bold and daring. It is entirely my intention to carry on the excellent work were Ged Start left off (not that the big man is going anywhere) and to provide you, the reader, with a continuing range of sparkling features, reviews and news. Coming from a fairly games-oriented PC background, I'm relatively new to multimedia myself. But it's exciting to see what is available to the public – the sheer wealth of information and the accessibility of it. Having said that, I still have my reservations about a good proportion of the multimedia software available on the market at present - technology is constantly lagging (witness the slow speeds of much of the software). I want to see more attention to design and detail as the multimedia revolution evolves and refines. What I *really* want to see are *instant* results - I don't like waiting for information to appear on screen and I certainly want to see the back of that damn egg-timer icon that constantly keeps me waiting in Windows! Slowly but surely we seem to be getting there - the potential is there to be seen - and *CD-ROM User* will always be here to keep you up to date on this most exciting and innovative sector of the PC marketplace.

Personally, I can see the face of Multimedia changing, big time, over the next couple of years. Creative's new ShareVision video conferencing - a solid piece of kit, weighing in at under £1000 and utilising standard telecommunications cabling - is available now and is all part of the multimedia umbrella. If this sort of hardware becomes cheaper and cheaper over the next few years, we'll no doubt see everyone conversing via a computer. In some ways this will be a pity because, ultimately, it will destroy much of the romance of modem chat - being able to see the face of the person you're conversing with doesn't leave much to the imagination does it? Despite this, it's a new and exciting bolt on the multimedia crossbow with which to fire at the cynics.

Turning to the magazine if I may; the month of April is upon us and, fools we are, there may be a few pranks, jollies and weird happenings inside the magazine that may have escaped the 'serious' net. Yep, it's time to have a laugh for a change. In Multimedia Weird (page 27) we take a look at just a few of the inane CD-ROM releases that we've collected over the past months – Lord knows, there have been enough of them!

Geoff Spick, our resident communications expert, introduces us to the endless possibilities of Video Conferencing. As I mentioned earlier, affordable VC hardware such as Creative's ShareVision could revolutionise the way MPCs are used – imagine being able to talk to a colleague while, at the same time, seeing their digitised face in a Windows screen. Not only is this available now, but the price is dropping all the time. We hope our feature whets your appetite for this new technology and hopefully we should have a full review in the next issue.

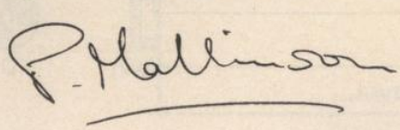
As multimedia continues to go MPEG crazy (ourselves included!) we have been lucky enough to get our grubby hands on two more decoder cards - except these cards are unlike any that we have seen before; they have 24-bit colour capabilities and produce much more sophisticated results than some of the cards we have seen recently. Now we get to watch Sharon Stone strutting about in little else but tea towel - this time in 16.7 million colours.

On the reviews front, we have two exclusives this month. *Virtua Chess* from Titus is one of the best chess programs we've ever seen and we've all being playing it over a network – sending insulting messages to each other. Okay, so it's not *Doom*, but at least *Virtua Chess* is better for the brain, and you don't get motion sickness either. This month's second exclusive comes in the form of the *MMU-2000* – a sleek-looking docking bay for laptop PCs. Plug the flat, grey box into your laptop via a PCMCIA connection and transform it into an all-singing, all dancing MPC unit. Turn to page 37 for a full review.

Ha-ha - and that's not all either! Yes, it's another two-disc issue. Alongside the excellent multimedia demos we also have a fully-playable *Virua Chess* demo and a full level of LucasArts' D*ark Forces* (which unfortunately requires eight megabyte of RAM to run). If you've never seen Word Perfect Main Street's *Paper Planes*, which a superbly presented piece of multimedia, then now's your chance because we've got the demo. There's much more on them too, but if you want to know more about the discs then turn to page 8 because I'm about to run out of space here.

On that note I'd like to sign off here. If you have anything to say about our magazine write to me at the usual address (see the back of the magazine if you're not quite sure) only make sure it's good, or I'll set Steve Frisby on you.

Enjoy the mag!



Paul Mallinson
Editor

CD-ROM User Disc Pages

How to get your CD-ROM User cover disc up and running.

About the disc

THE menuing system on the disc and most of the items on it require Windows 3.x to run. Wherever possible the programs will run directly from the CD, but a few of them do need to transfer files to your hard disk. The menuing system will make it quite clear when files are about to be transferred to your hard disk and how much space they need.

Some programs need a lot of free lower memory to run, so we have designed the menuing system to drop out when running these programs. When you have finished running these programs you will exit to the program or File Manager. To make re-starting the menu simple we recommend that you install an icon as shown below.

To run these programs, we recommend a minimum specification of 386SX 4Mbytes of RAM, VGA colour monitor running at 640x480 in 256 colour mode, mouse, MS-DOS 5.0 Windows 3.1 or 3.11, CD-ROM drive 150Kbytes/sec or better, sound card, 580k free lower memory and 1Mbyte EMS.

Some of the programs will run on lower specification machines, but this is the MPC Level One standard that we work to. All the programs have been tested in Windows 3.11 on a 486 DX 66MHz with 8Mbytes of RAM and worked fine in this configuration.

Running multiple programs, or having virus checkers running in the background, will often interfere with the correct operation of other programs. If you are having problems with a program check first to make sure no other programs are interfering with it and that you have enough free memory.

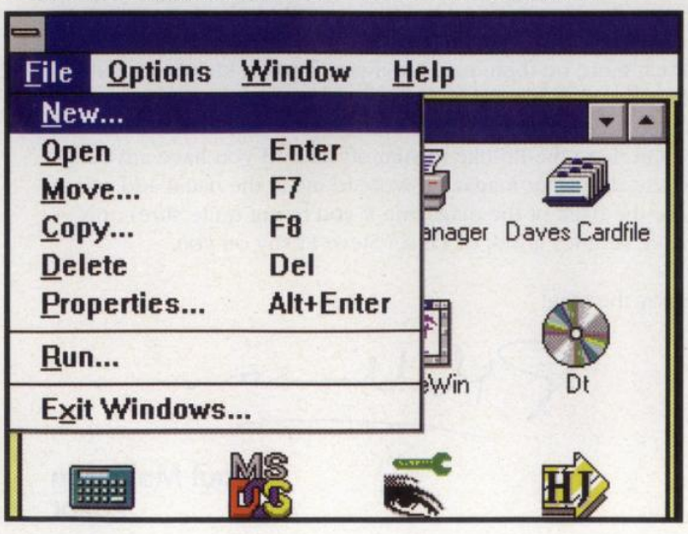
Quick Start

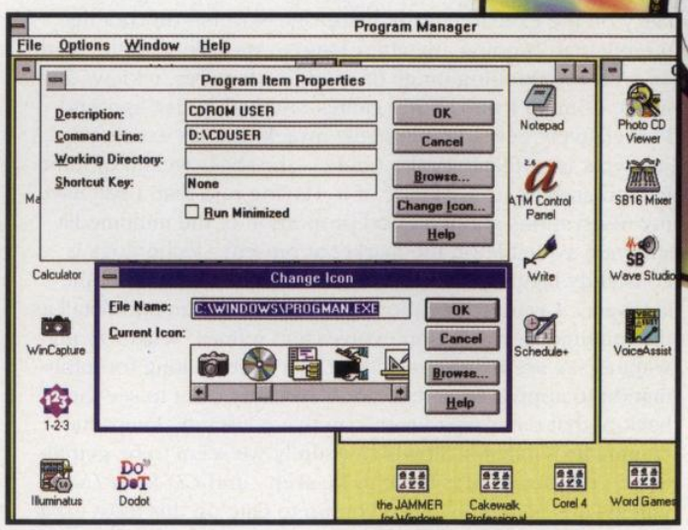
TO get the disc up and running quickly, open the ***File*** menu from Windows Program Manager then select ***Run*** and type ***D:\CDUSER*** (if your CD drive is not D: please enter the appropriate drive letter). Click on ***OK*** to get the simple menuing system up and running.

Alternatively, the menuing system and all the programs on the disc can be run directly from File Manager by clicking on the appropriate files. A full listing of all the programs, their locations and executable files is included in the menuing system and also in a file ***CDLIST.TXT*** which is in the ***FILES*** directory on the disc.

Installing an Icon

THIS method will not install any files to your hard disk and the code created disappears when the icon is deleted. The icon will work with all our future disks as well, so you only have to install it once. When carrying out this procedure, error messages saying that the program may not be there later will appear. This is normal, ignore them and the icon will be installed anyway.





◀ From Program Manager click on File, select New and when the New Program Object box appears select Program item and the click on OK

▲ Type CD-ROM USER in the description box and then your drive letter and the program name CDUSER as the command line. Click on Change Icon to allocate an icon to the program from those provided with Windows, such as the CD icon and then click on OK. This will produce an Icon called CD-ROM USER on the desktop.

DISC ONE:

Virtua Chess

COVER feature exclusive demo of this superb virtual chess program from Titus. If you appreciate well-designed, well-rendered packages which ooze style, then you really should check this out.

Essentially this is a demo limiting you to 21 moves of play, with very few options removed except the ability to save your current game. You will notice that the menu system on the disc will not run the game directly – this is due to the fact that, unfortunately, this demo will not run from within Windows. Simply exit from Windows, change to the drive letter of your CD-ROM drive and type:

CD\ <enter>
TITUS <enter>

If you experience problems using the mouse during play, there are a couple of command line switches to consider. Run the VIRTUA.EXE file from the \VCHESS directory on the CD with either of the following switches:

VIRTUA /M1
VIRTUA /M2

Also, if you require the tool bar to stay on screen permanently, run *Virtua Chess* with the following:

VIRTUA /MD

Check out the review of *Virtua Chess* starting on page 41.

Faulty disc?

CD-ROM User makes every effort to ensure that the disc you receive should be in perfect working order. In the event of the disc being damaged or faulty, send the disc complete with it case to;Customer Services, Department (FD), CD-ROM User, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 1NF. A replacement will be forwarded to you, please allow 14 days for delivery.

Any technical queries about programs contained on the disc can be sent to the same address, or our can Fax detail of your query to *CD-ROM User* on 01202 299955. Our technical support team will endevour to supply you with an answer to your problem within 24 hours.

Media Maestro Lite

THIS is the second exclusive on this month's main cover disc, and has the potential to give your multimedia presentations the look of professionalism. Media Maestro from Software Dynamics is a limited demo, in that it allows a maximum of 3 pages and 10 images to be loaded or saved into the package. Tutorials and demonstrations can be viewed using the Runtime Player included.

The package requires a hard disk installation, and will take up just over 4.3Mb of space. There is plenty of online help and a tutorial to help you get started.

Music From A New Dimension

Elephant Talk

THE new wave of acoustic music goes from strength to strength and riding the crest are Elephant Talk. Leeds-based, the band have been creating an exciting fusion of jazz, folk and world music. A four piece, Elephant Talk are as happy using didgeridoo as they are saxophones.

As you will discover when you listen to "Hector Skeltic", the band have a very natural, almost organic sound.

Lives & Times

LIVES & Times are fast becoming veterens of the recording scene, with a number of albums behind them. After releasing a series of CDs on their own label, the band came to the attention of Dutch label SI Music and it is from there they have released their last two albums.

The track featured here, "Why Do I Watch", never before released in this country.

Mother Carey's Chickens

THESE guys have been carving out quite a reputation for themselves on the live circuit and have just started getting some of that energy onto disc.

The track featured on the disc, "Chicken Reel" is taken from the band's recent "Tell My Ma!" album, which deals with subjects such as illicit sex and homelessness and shows why folk is still the last bastion of rebellion.

3D Studio 4 demo

The Rolling Gallery Demo

This rolling demo of images created using the *3D Studio* package will delight you with their sheer excellence, superb rendering and immediate accuracy – worthy of a package which won't leave you much change out of $3,500.

The Product Demo

The product demo will show you just what is achievable using 3D Studio. The demo will let you view at your own pace, and choose what you want to see.

To run after installation, which will take up nearly 3.3Mb of hard disk space, quit out from Windows and run the file DEMO.BAT created in the default install directory C:\3DSDEMO.

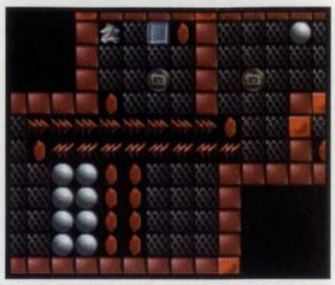
If you are impressed by this product and it's capabilities, watch this space as we plan to feature product demos of other Autodesk products.

Xplora 1

PETER Gabriel's secret world is unleashed in this latest celebrity CD-ROM. This limited interactive demo gives only a brief glimpse behind the facade of Mr. Gabriel – giving only a general idea of what the full CD contains but it will certainly impress. If you like the music of Peter Gabriel, you will no doubt be considering purchasing the full version already, but if you're in two minds, our review on page 48 may make up your mind for you.

Trugg

A small but surprisingly brain-taxing demonstration version of *Trugg*, a new game from Digital Workshop (creators of Illuminatus) similar in style to the popular 8-Bit game *Boulderdash*. The installation program will copy 1.5Mb of essential files over to your hard disk and run a sound setup program before entering the game.



Disc two

Dark Forces

THIS is a demonstration version of the sure-fire hit game heralded as the latest *Doom*-beater, and we think LucasArts have come up with a real winner.

The game should be run from outside Windows, to ensure a successful load. The installation routine should be run from DOS by running the DFORCES.BAT file, which you will find in the \FILES directory on the CD-ROM, and will copy less than 0.5Mb of files to the hard disk.

To run, change to the default installation directory where the files have been copied to (C:\LUCASART) and run the game with the file DFDEMO.BAT.

The installation will also prompt you for your Soundcard configuration before you will be able to run the demo.

Memphis Math

YOUR name is Dr. T.C. King and your mission is study ancient Egypt and search for the long lost Equations of the Pyramids. This demo teaches the basics of decimal and fraction mathematics in a captivating and entertaining way. The full version contains over 180 activities and more than 1800 problems to solve.

CyClones

RAVEN Software bring you their latest offering on CD-ROM in the form of this superb demonstration version of *CyClones*.

From the default installation directory C:\CYCLONE, run the game demo with the file CYCLONE.BAT. The install routine will copy close to 3Mb to the hard disk, and requires 8Mb RAM

CD-Direct

CD-DIRECT bring you an easy and uncomplicated way to purchase quality software direct from a reputable supplier. The construction of pages into software categories allow you to browse through the catalogue with its mass of software titles at your leisure. During the Windows installation, you may see the error message CAN'T FIND FILE CDDIRECT.FM. In such a case, you will be prompted to find the file, which will be located on the CD-ROM in the \CDDCAT directory.

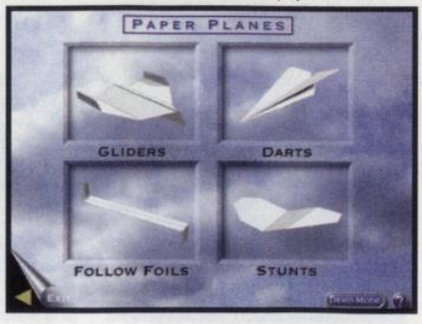
Korg X5 Demonstration

GED Start thought the *Korg X5* was so delicious, he decided to show us just what's possible using the keyboard. It is reviewed on page 36. You'll find six demonstration wave files available to play from the menu system.

Paper Planes

JUST when you thought that the paperless office was just around the corner, WordPerfect Main Street come along and stir things up. Using this package has to be the most fun time anyone can possibly have on a wet Wednesday in Bournemouth. Feel the stress just ooze out of your body as you are guided through folds, tucks and creases in the hope of creating the most aerodynamic flying machine known to man.

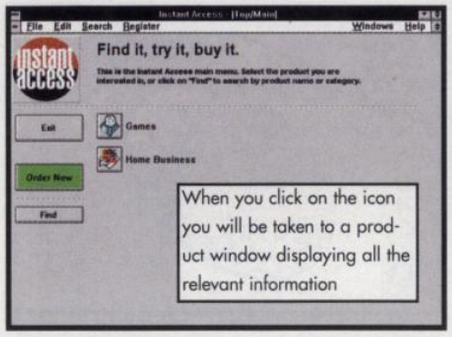
Four types of planes can be created in the full version of the software, but this demo has been limited to one type only – the glider. The step-by-step guides, simplifying animations and excellent narrations make this a joy to use.



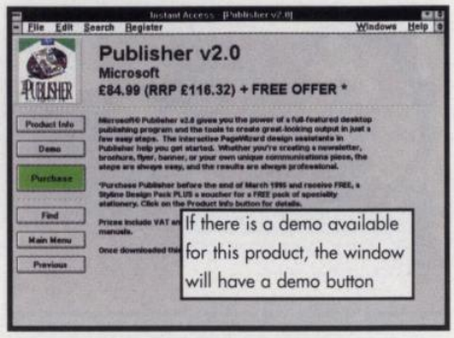
Instant access

CD-ROM User, in association with Instant Access, present you with the opportunity to buy Microsoft, Sherston and a range of other products at greatly reduced prices.

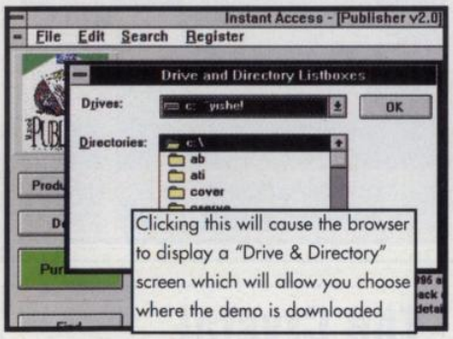
Install the Instant Access Browser from the CD-ROM User menu. Double click the Instant Access Browser icon to find a catalogue of demonstrations, trial and encrypted software.


Find it, try it, buy it.
Games
Home Business
When you click on the icon you will be taken to a product window displaying all the relevant information

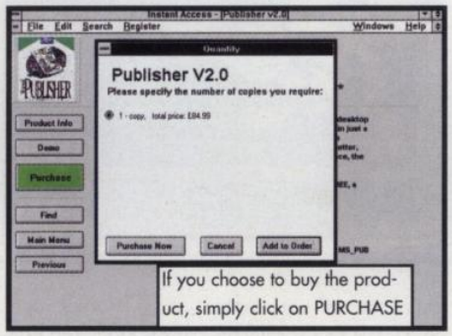
You will then find a menu with Games and Home Business options


Publisher v2.0
Microsoft
£84.99 (RRP £116.32) + FREE OFFER *
If there is a demo available for this product, the window will have a demo button

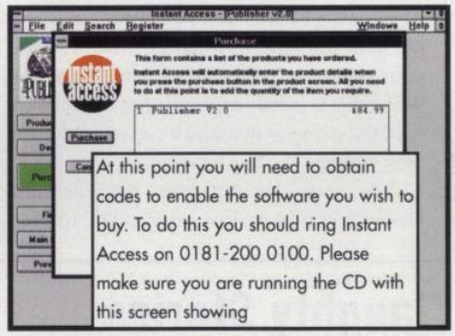
The window above shows a small picture of the product together with a brief description. For more information (system requirements, etc.) click the Product Info button.


Instant Access - [Publisher v2.0]
File Edit Search Register
Drive and Directory Listboxes
Drives:
Directories:
OK
Clicking this will cause the browser to display a "Drive & Directory" screen which will allow you choose where the demo is downloaded

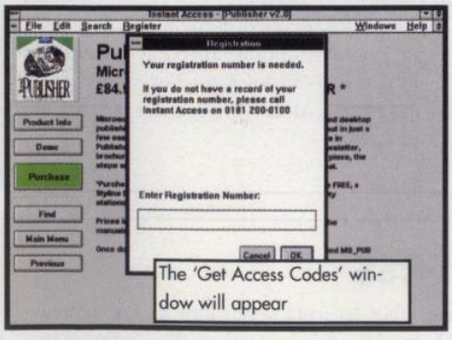
The "Drive & Directory" window will appear before any of the demos are installed to your computer


Publisher V2.0
Please specify the number of copies you require:
Purchase Now
Cancel
Add to Order
If you choose to buy the product, simply click on PURCHASE

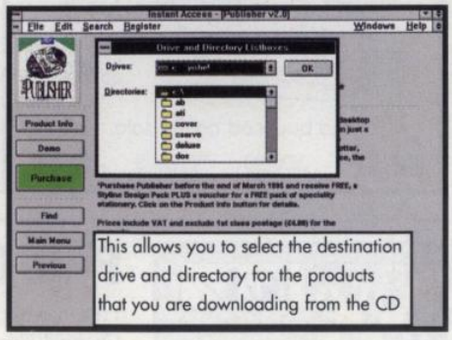
In the window above there are buttons which allow you to ADD TO AN ORDER or PURCHASE NOW. The ADD TO AN ORDER button allows you to return to the main menu to order more products


At this point you will need to obtain codes to enable the software you wish to buy. To do this you should ring Instant Access on 0181-200 0100. Please make sure you are running the CD with this screen showing

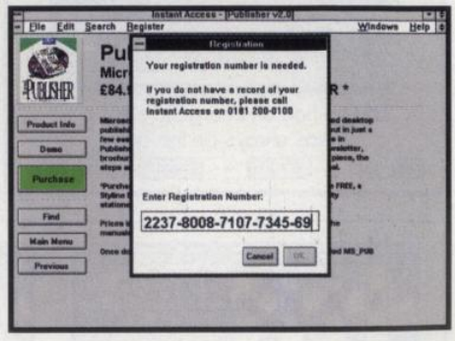
To obtain the access code that enables you to buy the software, call Instant Access on 0181-200 0100 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).


Registration
Your registration number is needed.
If you do not have a record of your registration number, please call Instant Access on 0181 200-0100
Enter Registration Number:
The 'Get Access Codes' window will appear

You will now be asked to read out the product code. In turn we will enter this code into our system and verify the product price. Once confirmed, the ACCESS CODE unlocking the software will be issued


Drive and Directory Listboxes
Drives:
Directories:
OK
This allows you to select the destination drive and directory for the products that you are downloading from the CD

Once you have access to the software, you must then choose a drive and directory to download it into


Registration
Your registration number is needed.
If you do not have a record of your registration number, please call Instant Access on 0181 200-0100
Enter Registration Number:
2237-8008-7107-7345-69

You will now be able to click on the RETRIEVE button for the package to be downloaded automatically. If in doubt call Instant Access on 0181-200 0100

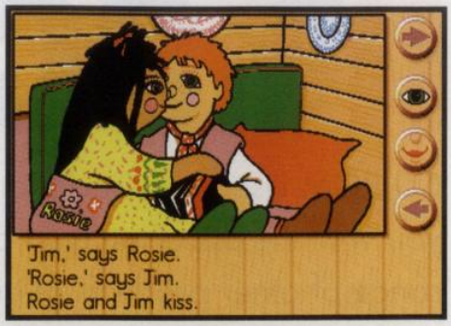
All programs on this page should be run in DOS with a mouse driver installed

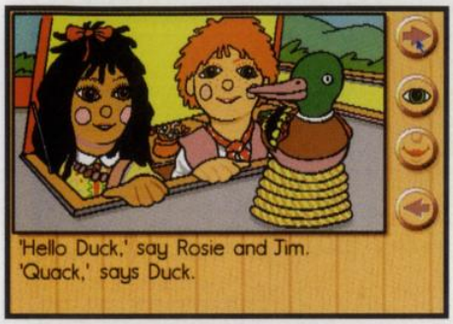
Rosie and Jim in Jim gets the sneezes

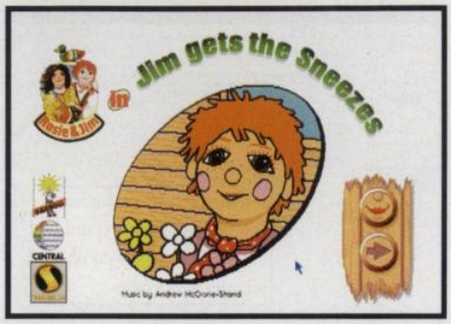
All the demos listed on this page are available for you to try straight from the cover disc. Follow the instructions on the previous page.

Children will love this demo of Jim gets the sneezes, featuring the two most famous rag dolls in the world. As well as a story with text and speech, children are encouraged to interact with this demo and practise identifying different numbers, shapes and colours.

A pay-as-you-play version of Duck Loses His Quack can be purchased from the disc.







CyberRace

As well as the programs from Sherston, you can order a copy of CyberRace, a thrilling three dimensional racing game with stunning graphics.

Pit your skills against lethal opponents as you steer your ship over alien landscapes. The game also features stunning video sequences like the one shown below.

A demo program has been provided to give you a taste of the incredible world that is CyberRace.

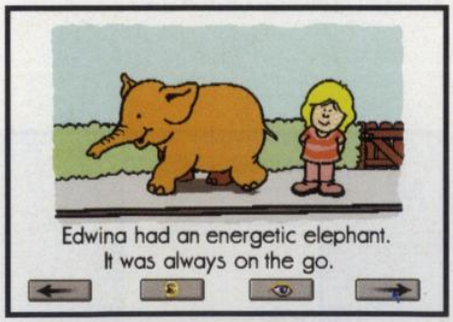
The Crystal Maze

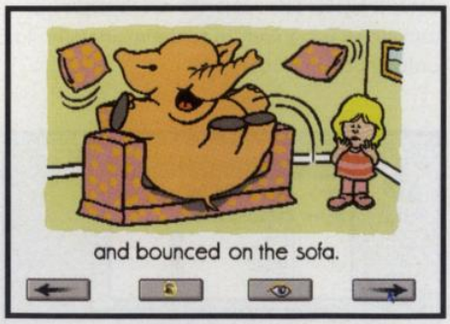
Sherston Software give Channel Four's popular gameshow the edutainment treatment. In this demo, you face the challenge of the Aztec zone. Choose between physical, mental, skill and mystery games that will test your mind and co-ordination to the limits. While this is suitable for all ages, the difficulty of the games will make it too tough for the very young.

You must quit out from Windows and ensure you mouse driver is installed to run.

Naughty Stories

This one is for the young and the young at heart. There are 11 more stories available in this set of interactive story books. See README.TXT for details. This is FREE and normally costs £12.87. Currently you can order four stories for the price of three..





The Crystal Rainforest

Learn about the importance of the rainforest and save the planet from the evil Cut and Run gang. This adventure is suitable for all ages and features size and shape recognition puzzles as well as teaching respect for the environment.

A simple point and click interface makes *The Crystal Rain Forest* fun for all age groups. Mouse driver must be installed for DOS.

Fritz Chess

Fritz has recently shot to instant stardom in the recent Channel Four Short vs. Kaspirov match earlier last year in London. The demo version will let you access most options, but is limited in the amount of moves available and does not let you save your matches.

A massive library of famous world championship matches is also included for you to view.

Microsoft Publisher

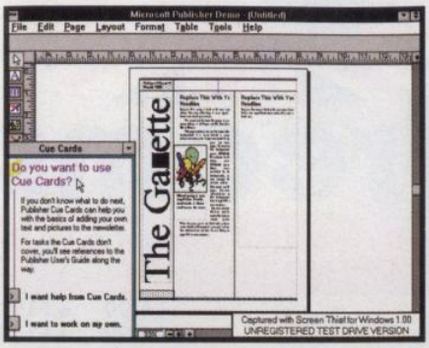
PUBLISHER is a document design program that allows you to create graphic and text based documents.

The most helpful aspect of *Publisher* is its use of PageWizards that allow you to design pages to a standard layout. With the demonstration version you are restricted to designing news letters but with the full version available with Instant Access there are many types of PageWizard available from tape cassette covers to calendars

Cue Cards are also available to help you get to grips with publisher. All the features associated with Desk Top Publishing packages are included within Publisher bound within an easy to use interface, text formatting, flexible layouts and page settings.

As with the Instant Access Microsoft *Works* package saving, help and tools utilities are not available in the demo version but with a phone call you can be granted full access to all features.

Microsoft *Publisher* costs only £84.99 + £4 postage, saving £30 on the RRP.


Microsoft Publisher Demo - (Untitled)
File Edit Page Layout Format Table Tools Help
Cue Cards
Do you want to use Cue Cards?
The Gazette
I want help from Cue Cards.
I want to work on my own.
Captured with Screen Thief for Windows 1.00
UNREGISTERED TEST DRIVE VERSION

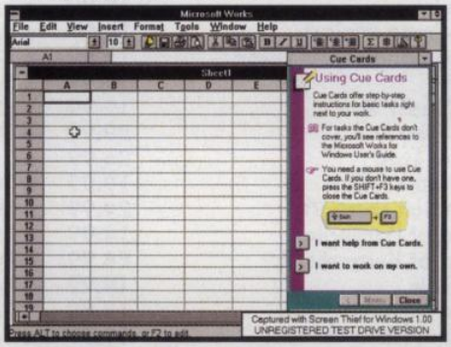
Microsoft Works

WHY bother buying separate utilities for your PC when you can buy the lot in one go and be assured of easy interaction between any kind of document? If this sounds useful then Microsoft *Works* could be for you. Here on the CD we have the demo version that you can peruse and experiment with at your leisure.

If you decide that it's for you then a simple phone call with your credit card details will grant you instant access to the full package. Microsoft *Works for Windows* version 3.0 consists of a word processor, spreadsheet, database, drawing and communications module. All accessible from a single launcher program and all capable of interacting with each other.

In real terms this means that you can create a spreadsheet and incorporate in your letters or transfer results from it into your database.

The only restrictions on the demo version are a lack of document save, file conversion facilities from other packages, on-line help information and tools such as spell checker, thesaurus or row sorter. All these features become active if you purchase the full product through instant access.


Microsoft Works
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Window Help
Cue Cards
Using Cue Cards
I want help from Cue Cards.
I want to work on my own.
Captured with Screen Thief for Windows 1.00
UNREGISTERED TEST DRIVE VERSION

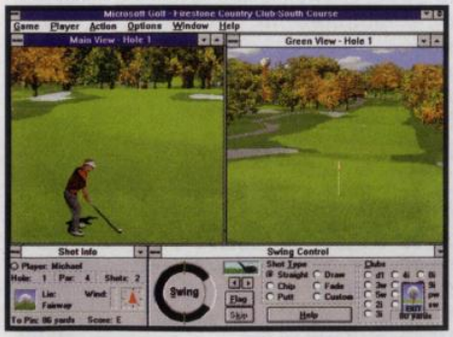
Microsoft Scenes

This free program installs a number of impressive screen savers to your hard drive.

They are absolutely free and would cost around £20 if bought normally.

Microsoft Golf v.2

Microsoft Gold v.2 is arguably the best golf simulator available for the PC today. At these prices, golf fans will love it! Extra courses are also available to buy from this CD.

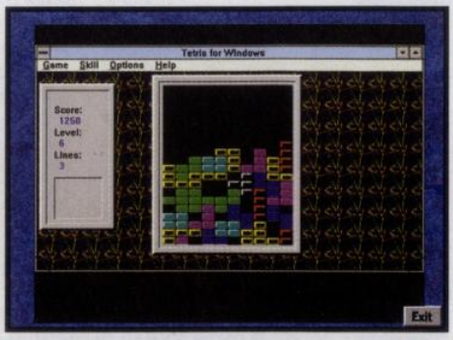


Flight Sim 5.0

Take to the skies in Microsoft's legendary *Flight Sim 5.0* – would-be pilots can practise their flying on a PC. Scenery disks are also available to purchase from the disc.

Entertainment Pack

Featuring a number of board, card and puzzle games – Microsoft Entertainment is a fun package for all the family. There's even a version of Tetris on there.



At last the mail order club all you CD-Rom users have been **DREAMING** of with prices you have only dreamt about if you want to save 30%, 40% even 50% on R.R.P. on top games and professional titles then the **DREAM** has come true.

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• Cyclones	19.99	• Legend of Kyrandia II	24.99	• Top 50 Games MS-Dos	9.99
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• Audubon's Dinosaurs	9.99	• Kodak Photo Access	14.99	• PC Globe	19.99	• World of Gif	9.99
• Audubon's Mammals	9.99	• MS Bookshelf '94	34.99	• Printshop Deluxe	29.99	• World of MS-Dos (2 cd's)	9.99
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• Comptons Encyclop. '95	24.99	• MS Encarta '95	59.99	• Tuneland	19.99	• World of Sound	9.99
• Coral Draw 5.0	249.99	• MS Money	19.99	• Windowworks & Winfax Lt.	44.99	• World of Windows	9.99
• Digital Morph	19.99	• MS Musical Instruments	34.99	• World Atlas 5.0	19.99	• World of Languages	9.99

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CD-ROM User NewsNet

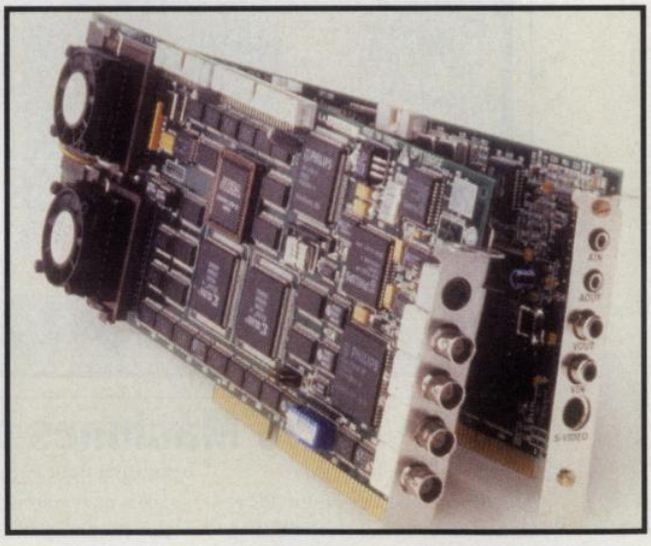
New CD-ROM pack from Silica

FANCY a super fast, quad speed CD plus decent software for under £200? Well Amitek are offering the NEC CDR-271 drive with the latest E-IDE technology interface that is compatible with all AT PCs at the totally excellent price of £198.58. The internal drive boasts a 256K cache and a data transfer speed of 600K a second and it will fit into a spare 51/4 inch drive bay. Power IDE software is included that solves any problems associated with Windows 32-bit disk access. So that you won't be bored with your new CD drive, the package contains £99 worth of CD-ROM software. Included are Microsoft's Encarta '95 encyclopedia, the aneCDote CD magazine, a 3D animation display program called Animator and Sneak Peaks, a collection of 39 Sierra game demos. Just when everyone was getting settled down with their twin speed drives as standard, it looks like the industry is ready to make us all rush for our credit cards again, although thankfully quad-speed only games will take quite a while to filter into the stores. In the meantime, disc-intensive games like *Wing Commander III* and *Under A Killing Moon* should certainly benefit from the higher transfer speeds offered by quad speed drives.

Tel: Silica - 0181 308 1230

Better MPEG-1 from Optibase

MPEG Lab Suite from Optibase is a top-end compression system for professional compression of MPEG. New features include a 'decode while encode' system that enables the user to watch the MPEG file as it is being created. New editing software allows the user to correct badly or unsatisfactorily encoded segments. An analog component / YUV input capability has been added. Optional software includes offline compression of MPEG data which lets the computer create the highest possible quality compression. The resulting files can be pasted into original MPEG streams.



Birth of the interactive single

THE Multi Media Disc (MMD) is the first format to combine the audio CD and multimedia features in a professional musical release. "Moral Judgement" is the title of the single by Smalltown Heroes, a Sunderland-based rock group. The single is available from the end of the March on independent label E.G. Records. The single includes three audio-only tracks and the Heroes Home Movie, a promo for the single, including concert footage and a history of the band.

The disc presents you with a menu screen from which you can play both the audio and multimedia tracks. You can catch Smalltown Heroes on tour with the Jeff Healey Band in April, see press for details.

SimEverything with Maxis

YET more additions to the Sim range are now available from Maxis, *SimTown* is available on CD-ROM and is aimed at 8 to 12 year olds and runs as a simplified version of *SimCity* with bigger, brighter graphics that teach children about the environmental issues surrounding urban development. The child can also design their own characters to live in the town and a Peel-Away feature allows the player to look inside the houses as the characters live their lives.

SimRainforest puts you in charge of a large biomass which you must manage and maintain the delicate balance between nature, conservation and development. People who will influence your decisions are natives, experts, missionaries and tourists. There is a digital library that brings the sights and sounds of the rainforest to your PC.

SimTower takes a vertical approach to the sim style and puts you in charge of a construction similar to one of the Arcos from SimCity 2000. The important decisions here are based around balancing your limited space for residences, offices, restaurants, shops and entertainment centres, but watch out for the nasty terrorists and plagues of cockroaches and even an attack of the King Kong variety.

More Micro Machines mania

THE coolly received *Micro Machines* came out on the PC just as console owners were thrilling to the sequel with its four-player mayhem and more detailed graphics. Now PC owners can join in the fun fest with the CD-ROM version of *Micro Machines 2*. Scheduled for a May release, the game will offer 51 tracks, 17 vehicles and the four-player fun of the console version. Also featured will be a unique track construction kit enabling you to create your own flavour of circuit. While it may not challenge *Doom* on the gore front, it will certainly put up a fight in the playability stakes as witnessed by gaggles of staff crammed around the Megadrives in the offices of our Sega magazines.

Another console conversion on the way from Codemasters is *Psycho Pinball,* based on the highly rated Megadrive game, and looking to challenge *Pinball Fanasies.* Although lacking the bonus arcade games of the Megadrive, it still plays a mean game of pinball and allows up to four players to fight it out over its four tables: Fun Fair, Trick or Treat, Wild West and The Abyss.

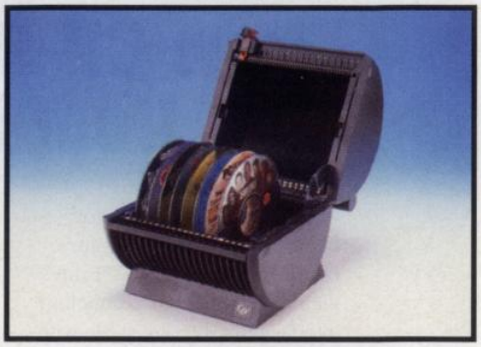
Kids just want to Playtoons

PLAYTOONS are the latest in Coktel's range of CD-ROM edutainment programs aimed at the younger market. Launched in March "Uncle Archibald" and "Spirou – The Case Of the Counterfeit Collaborator" are stories with fully interactive objects and characters. When the story is finished children can create their own adventures with the characters using the story construction tool. Coktel have created these products with the assistance of local educationalists to ensure a level of learning and their own development team has produced a piece of software sure to delight, entertain and teach your children.

Save your CDs

CONGRATULATIONS, we finally got rid of the paper office (if only), only to find mountains of little circular shiny plastic objects littering our desks. Help is at hand however in the form of the CD3, a chunky black box that can store up to 40 discs.

The flip top lid has a really neat slide mechanism that can pull out the CD you require by simply sliding the pointer along to the correct number for that CD. A sheet inside the top of the box will enable you to keep track of which CD you store where. The CD3 is available in black or white and retails for £34.95.



All golfers go to heaven

FAIRWAY to Heaven by Gametek is a golfing game with a difference. Due for release in April, it takes the best hole from 18 of the World's best courses to create a single course of awesome golfing potential and credibility. The CD-ROM version will retail at around £44.99 and features video footage, interviews with the course designers and golfers such as Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, multiple camera angles including golfer view, ball cam, TV view and approach. The digitised players, arcade-style gameplay and different game types promise gameplay to match the graphics.

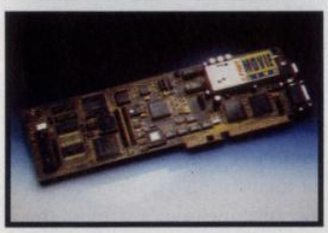
Also coming from Gametek on CD-ROM is the rather oddly titled *Baldies* from new programming outfit, Creative Edge. Looking like a folically challenged version of *Populous* the game involves various cutely drawn baldy tradesmen, including workers, soldiers and scientists. *Baldies* live their own happy little lives until the player asks them to perform a task, they are attacked or hit by an act of god. The aim of the game is to outlive computer-controlled enemy tribes. The action takes place in a wide range of scenarios from Egyptian, Medieval, Cutey Mushroom to Jungle. One of the game's features is the use of clay animation to generate the intro and cut scenes.

Tel: 0753 553445.

The video mix

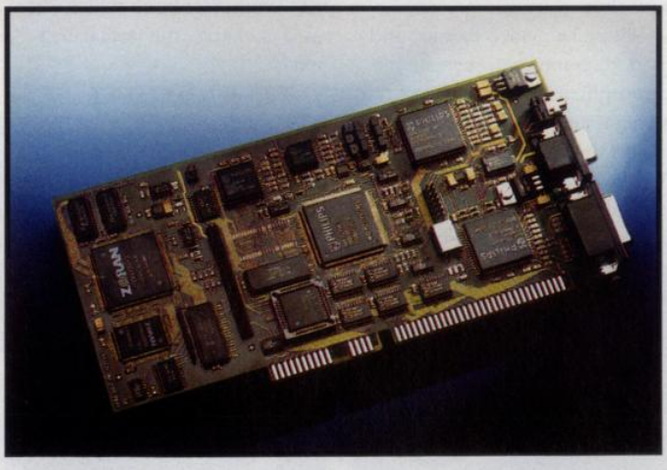
MOVIE Machine II is FAST Electronics' new flagship product. It includes a real-time mixer with video in and out running at VHS and S-VHS quality, digital video effects, video titling, overlay, grabbing, TV and teletext tuner on one card.

There are options for piggy back cards featuring either Motion JPEG for non-linear video editing or an MPEG card for Video CD playback. The MMII works with PAL, NTSC and SECAM inputs and the effects featured include dissolve and zoom, thanks to technology based on FAST's high-end Video Machine hardware.



PCI-Video is a video system that uses the speed of the PCI bus to offer some impressive features. It offers true colour graphics with a Video for Windows accelerator, input and output for VHS and S-VHS connections and a TV tuner with teletext facility. It uses the Tseng ET4000 W32P and runs at the following resolutions, 800*600 at 24bit colour, 1024*768 at 16bit and 1280*1024 at 8bit. The PCI video system accelerates Video for Windows to DCI standard and uses a Viper chip to scale both analog and digital video.

Also available is the FPS60, a digital editing card that compresses at 50 frames per second for PAL video in M-JPEG format. It uses Zoran chips to write the compressed information to the hard disk at up to 2.7Mb a second, and can overlay video images in 24bit true colour at up to 1280*1024 resolution. The package comes with the necessary drivers and is designed for use with programs such as Adobe Premiere and ULead MediaStudio.



Jump or join the Dead Club

JUMP Raven, from Viacom New Media, could be the coolest game of the year, taking its vision of the future from films like Mad Max and Escape from New York. It won many awards in its Mac incarnation and will shortly be available for PC CD-ROM.

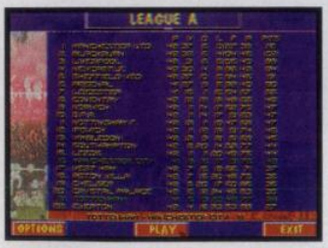
The game is set in a future New York, divided between cyberpunk gangs and megacorps. You play a mercenary pilot known as Jump Raven whose job is to recover stolen containers that hold the genetic codes for all the world's surviving species. As Jump Raven you can select one of six computer co-pilots and 24 weapons for your vehicle from a TV shopping channel.

Also due for release from Viacom is MTV's first computer game, *Club Dead,* which hurls the player into a sci-fi mystery adventure set in 2024. As cyberplumber, Sam Frost, your task is to investigate some mysterious deaths at a resort for celebrities and the wealthy. The game features over 90 minutes of live action video, 20 locations and a wild array of suspicious characters. Using MTV's highly visual style and their mixture of video and effects, this is certainly going to be a really riveting piece of software.

Glories new and old

FOOTBALL Glory, a big hit on the Amiga, is due out on CD-ROM in a specially developed version. Programmed by Croatian team, Croteam, and published by Black Legend, *Football Glory* promises digitised graphics, video footage, extra tactics and speech. The game is played from an overhead perspective and offers all the usual features plus many stunt movements including overheads, backheels and diving headers.

Oldtimer CD-ROM is part of MAX designs' 'recent history' series and gives you the challenge of designing and racing your own early twentieth century cars. The racing takes place against texture-mapped backgrounds and allows you to compete against the elite cars of the time. A reference section lets you view the sights and sounds of the era with comprehensive technical details of the cars, the personalities of the time and the races where the two combined to produce some of the most thrilling and dangerous moments of the age.



Living Books for living kids

LIVING Books, the best selling and multi-award winning children's software from America is now available over here. Currently seven titles are available including The Tortoise and the Hare, Little Monster at School and Harry and the Haunted House, all priced at £39.99. Each book's pages come with brightly drawn cartoons and a narrator, who goes through the story, which the child can play with page by page. There are many interactive hot spots to choose with the mouse pointer on each page which adds to the fun. Each story comes with singing, dancing characters who add their own comments to the story. Recommended age ranges are from 3-8 or 6-10, depending on the product.

SIGMA launch low cost MPEG authoring system

THE RealMagic Producer is the first MPEG authoring system to fully comply with Microsoft's AVI editable MPEG format and will cost around £,3000. The hardware consists of a 32-bit PCI bus encoder board, software includes Adobe Premiere, Caligari trueSpace, a training CD-ROM and a frame accurate video tape recorder tool. The system will enable small developers to add MPEG to their games, presentations, training products and other applications. At the heart of the Producer board is the C-Cube CL-4000, the first single chip, real-time encoder / decoder.

This product requires a Pentium PC, a spare 32-bit PCI bus slot, VGA or SVGA graphics card, MPEG playback board and Windows 3.1. Also needed is a spare serial port for controlling a video tape recorder.

For quality video capture 16Mb of RAM, a SCSI hard disk with 500Mb free and a Soundblaster compatible card are required.

Viacom takes the junior director's chair

HAVE you ever wanted to create your own films? Ever fancied yourself as the next Spielberg? Can't afford millions of dollars for A-list actors or ILM special effects? Director's Lab CD-ROM is aimed at a young audience and allows kids to create all manner of multimedia presentations and videos by using items from a large stock collection of video, sound and graphic effects, or allowing kids to make their own. Made in collaboration with Nickleodeon TV and presented by Melissa Joan Hart, star of Saturday morning TV's 'Clarissa Explains It All', the Lab features six different production studios, each with a set of professional design tools with which to create the final product which can be viewed in the Screening Room where the crowd will greet the showing with roaring applause.

Another Viacom product aimed at a younger audience is *Are You Afraid Of The Dark? – The Tale Of Orpheo's Curse.* Ranged at children aged 8 and over, *Orpheo's Curse* is a tale in the spirit of Phantom of the Opera. A Chicago theatre stands empty, home to the ghosts of performers from past decades.

Two children get trapped in the theatre by one of the evil ghosts. If they are not to be used in an ever failing, somewhat terminal and extremely painful magic trick, they must unravel the mysteries of the theatre by exploring secret rooms and pathways and solving the puzzles that are thrown up, by collecting any clues.

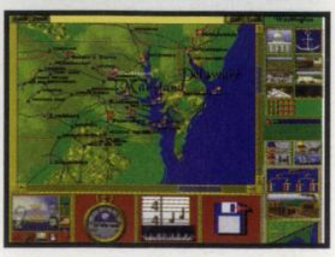
Using live video footage and period costumes to recreate the atmosphere of the heyday of the theatre, and movie style prosthetics for the monstrous characters, *Orpheo's Curse* looks likely to go down a treat with both young and oldr audiences alike.

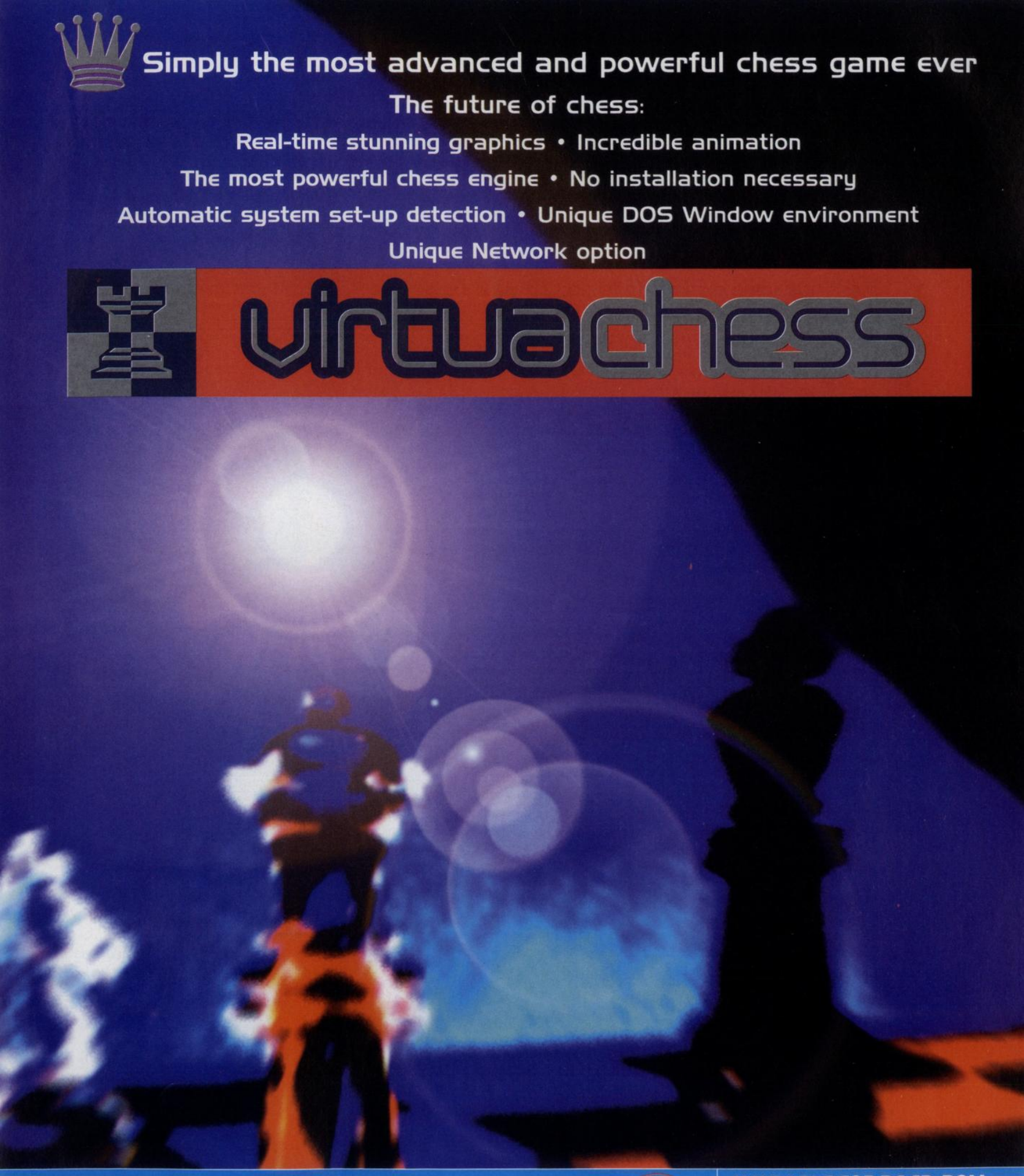
Empire offer Civil War or CyberJudas

CIVIL War is an attempt by Empire to recreate the entire conflict of the US Civil War on CD-ROM. Using SVGA graphics and Empire's patented Intuitive Combat Control Interface, *Civil War* lets you play as either the Confederates or Union forces in a war game that uses Gouraud-shaded terrain and texture maps to make the battlefield as realistic as possible.

CyberJudas goes from America's past into its future. The sequel to *Shadow President,* it puts you in the role of the US President and offers you three types of gameplay. Using Silicon Graphics, artificial intelligence and virtual actors, it puts you into cyberspace to fight your enemies and survive the threat of the *CyberJudas.* The game lets you perform 40 actions in a world where 160 countries are all looking to further their own aims and ambitions. Advisors play an important part in the game, one of them being a traitor. The package also includes a copy of the CIA world fact book which alters as you change the political climate.

Tel: 0181 343 7337.

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Conferring Allowed

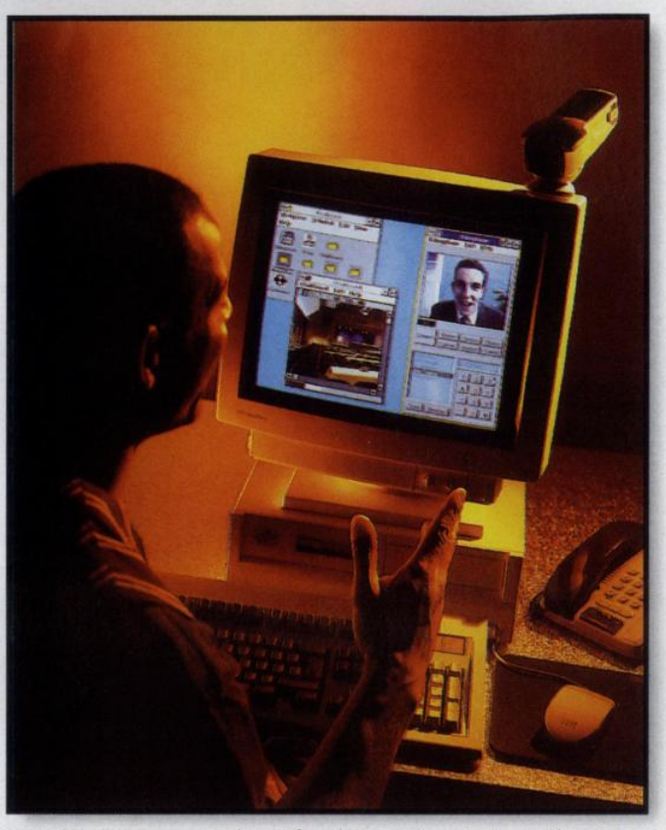
In the world of videophones, talking is only half the story. **Geoff Spick** has some explaining to do.

VIDEOPHONES are currently the preserve of the large business market, the day when everyone has a home videophone is a good few years off at least. This article is all about video conferencing for professional use, but most things that begin life as business tools end up in the home. Sci-fi films, such as Blade Runner, Aliens and Demolition Man, seem confident that we'll have them in the future, and who are we to argue. Hopefully, in a few years, with the advent of widespread fibre optic cable connections and the expansion of the Internet Multicast Backbone, the requirement for an ISDN phone connection may become redundant in the not too distant future, but the cost of a compact video camera and some expensive data handling hardware still puts the age of the common place videophone many years away.

Another factor keeping videophones out of the home is the human element. Most of us don't want to see one another, and all manner of strangers, at all hours. In all likelihood, home owners would set the family bassett hound on any phone company engineer trying to install one in the hall or living room. This kind of technology is not going to be welcome in the home for a long time. Currently this is just as well, as the cheapest of these products costs around £1000. So these devices are being firmly aimed at the office market as the latest 'big thing' in communications, video conferencing.

The big picture

The main problem facing anyone attempting to convert sound and pictures into a digital stream is the volume of data involved. The solution is a codec, a piece of code either in hardware or software that converts incoming data into a compressed format and decompresses outgoing data back into audio visual data. Due to the nature of the data, separate codecs are usually used for audio and video signals. A hardware codec is usually more desirable to have, due to its increased performance but they are obviously more expensive than their software equivalents.

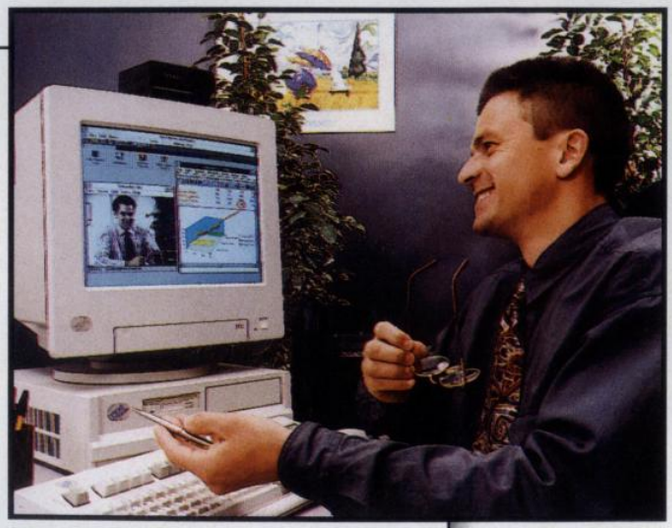


Simply looking at people and objects isn't the limit of video conferencing with a PC, while data conversion may prove an obstacle to video conferencing, one of the big advantages of using computers as a base unit is that transferring computer files and data becomes a simple task and, thanks to ISDN, a speedy task at that. File sharing and transfer play a major part in conferencing. A document from any application can be viewed by the participants and edited by everyone involved using chalkboards or conference workspaces.

PictureTel LIVE PCS 50

Tel 01753 673000

The PictureTel kit costs about £2,500, claiming to be the cheapest product of its kind on the market. It comes with video camera, phone or headset and relevant hardware and software, ready to connect to your 386DX or better PC with Windows 3.1 or better installed. Conforming to the H.320 video communications standards, the PCS 50 requires an ISDN connection, with video windows slightly larger than the Creative Labs product. LIVEShare software means users can interact with applications across each system.



Standards

If you thought the PC had too many standards, you wait until you get into the world of communications. Every new type of transmission requires its own standard and as they speed up new standards are enforced to keep everyone communicating without clashes.

The CCITT standards for modems are fairly well known, relating to transmission speed and compression. Since video conferencing standards

Fountain P5-60 VC System

Tel 01707 272627

This is an all-in-one PC solution to your video conferencing needs. No installation worries, no compatibility concerns, they'll even arrange the installation of your ISDN lines. The computer itself is a powerful 60MHz Pentium machine that comes with 12Mb of RAM, PCI graphics controller, 15 inch monitor and all the hardware and software needed for your video conferencing system.

The Fountain system makes use of the Intel ProShare setup. A compact camera is mounted on top of the PC and is neat enough to be unobtrusive. The software includes an onscreen notebook that allows quick and easy transfer of data and the ability to manipulate and edit it from both ends of the connection.

The PCs are manufactured in the UK by Highmead Technologies, a company that has built up a reputation for quality equipment and service. It has one of these machines set up permanently in its offices and carries out regular demonstrations for individuals and companies who need this type of facility.

The downside of the ProShare system is that it requires an ISDN phone line rather than a standard BT line. While some areass have easy access to ISDN lines, out of the way places do not have access to these facilities yet. This is unfortunate as it is these areas that could benefit most.

The Intel components are of the standard you would expect from such a company. The Fountain PC is alo a high quality item and is fully supported by Highmead's AfterCare which includes 12 months on-site service in the purchase price with a full range of options for extended warranties. Highmead are certainly one of the most approachable companies in the industry.

At well over £3,500 it isn't the cheapest way to get into video conferencing but the advantage of the all-in-one solution cannot be understated to the decision makers of this world, since you also get a very high specification PC with which to do regular work, it may make a very good buy. H.320 compatibility will be available by the time you read this.

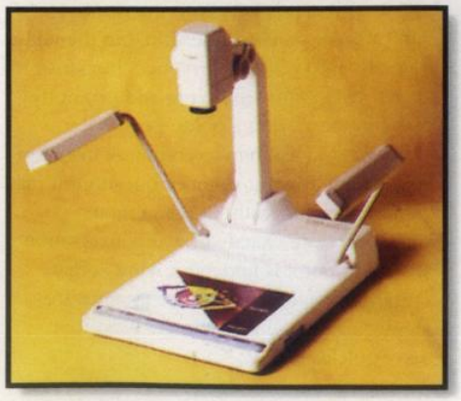
use the same medium they are also controlled by the CCITT (now known as TSS). The main standard is known as H.320 which includes the H.261 standard. However, the compression and decompression of video and audio also needs to be standardised. The current video compression standard complies with H.320 and audio compression has a range of standards known as G.728, G.711 and G.722.

All these are generally becoming accepted as standards for ISDN video conferencing, but they are being upgraded for the next generation. The next standard is currently known as H.32P.

Applications

The traditional users of video conferencing have been corporate businesses and research departments around the world, groups who have always communicated with each other by the latest methods in the past have been talking and demonstrating live on a global scale without the huge expense of dedicated connections or satellite links. New areas of use for video conferencing are being found, though. Long distance education can now be carried out almost like a normal lecture, although the attendance figures can now be in the hundreds, maybe even thousands, rather than a tribe of students crammed into a lecture theatre.

▼ **Document cameras can let everyone else view paper-based information during a video conference**



A really useful application of video conferencing is in the prison service, where prisoners can 'attend' remand hearings and appeals through a conferencing system, wiping out the risk of their escaping while being moved from the jail to the courthouse. Hospitals are also becoming very interested in the possibilities offered by 0video conferencing. There are only so many specialists throughout any country's hospitals and to have them available anywhere in the country could be a vital asset when medical economies are being squeezed so tight.

There are several prototype systems currently running in the UK. One of the most interesting ones is known as MARIA (Multimedia Applications for Regional and International Access) A project which will assess the impact of telematics on the medical profession.

PictureTel LIVE PCS100

Tel 01753 673000

The big brother to the PCS 50, the 100 model's major features are its use of information sharing tools, such as whiteboards and linked clipboards. As with the Creative Labs product, there is a similar system for application sharing within Windows. It also has additional video and digital network features. This extra demand requires two full length ISA or EISA slots free in your PC.

MARIA is running in two parts. The regional program involves the Institute of Child Health and demonstrates Paediatrics using video conferencing, online library facilities and other multimedia applications. The European-wide part of the project is run from the National Cancer Institute in Amsterdam and is designed to study what infrastructure, organisation and security is required for a full European Cancer network and how it would be used.

Another service that can be offered to improve the consumer's lot is the help kiosk. Obvious examples of companies that could benefit from this are banks and travel firms, where the same information is replicated across the country in every traditional branch. Trials of laserdisc-based help kiosks with recorded actors and graphic menus have been running for a few years but, although these facilities are fine for systems that give out a limited amount of information, they can never really replace the versatility of a real human employee.

Video conferencing could also be a boon for salespeople. They may find that video conferencing with customers could improve the lot of both parties. The visual reactions of customers can improve the sales person's ability to guage just how successful their sales pitch is being. On the other side, the potential customer can see exactly what is on offer and they can also gauge the standards of the company they are dealing with. Admittedly, this future does not bode well for telesales staff without model-like features and a reasonable acting ability.

"There may be trouble ahead"

While consumer demand for video conferencing phones may take time to grow, its acceptance may be delayed by the many social implications for the new technology. Just one demand that may need to be legislated for when video conferencing finally becomes generally available will be features such as automatic line tracing for security purposes. This may smell of Big Brother to the libertarians out there, but a whole new generation of phone pests is waiting for the day when they can frighten, threaten and shock with graphic effect.

If it becomes easy to transmit quality video signals across these systems, then video piracy and the copying of uncertified material across international boundaries will become even easier and very hard for authorities to stop.

Look to the future

While all the current products may seem impressive, they are only the first wave in an area that will play an increasing role in our lives. The companies, innovators and researchers aren't standing still in the world of video conferencing. The future of video conferencing lies in better forms of data compression which can be handled by less expensive hardware and use less bandwidth.

The next level of data compression is being devised in labs around the world, with some advanced work being done at the University of Nottingham where the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering's Smart Communications Research Group is looking at new ways to compress raw data.

They are using a method known as Motion Compensation which analyses the change of shapes in an image between one frame and the next. Another innovation is likely to be predictive algorithms that will guess where screen elements will move in the next frame.

▲ A PictureTel additional camera, useful for looking out of other people's windows during conferences

Doing it live

My first video conference, at a PictureTel site in London, was a fairly weird experience, having grown up with the humble telephone and recently learned all about the minefield that is netiquette when using the Internet, I was prepared for an easy ride. I mean, what can go wrong with the simple act of talking to someone on the other end of a TV? In reality – lots.

Firstly, the people down the other end of the connection are around .2 or .3 of a second behind you in the conversation and vice versa, this may not sound like much but it does take some getting used to, especially when you try to interrupt.

Imagine they are talking and the words hit you .2 seconds later, you interrupt to make a point or ask a question, but the talker is already into his next sentence, he pauses to listen to what you are saying and promptly loses his way, being a polite person you apologise and ask him to continue, interrupting his reply to your point or question. It may sound trivial and without being there you can't appreciate exactly how a conversation falls apart, but it is fairly annoying at first. Although people who use the systems frequently assure me that you get used to it pretty quickly.

Current levels of video transmission also

PictureTel System 1000/4000

Tel 01753 673000

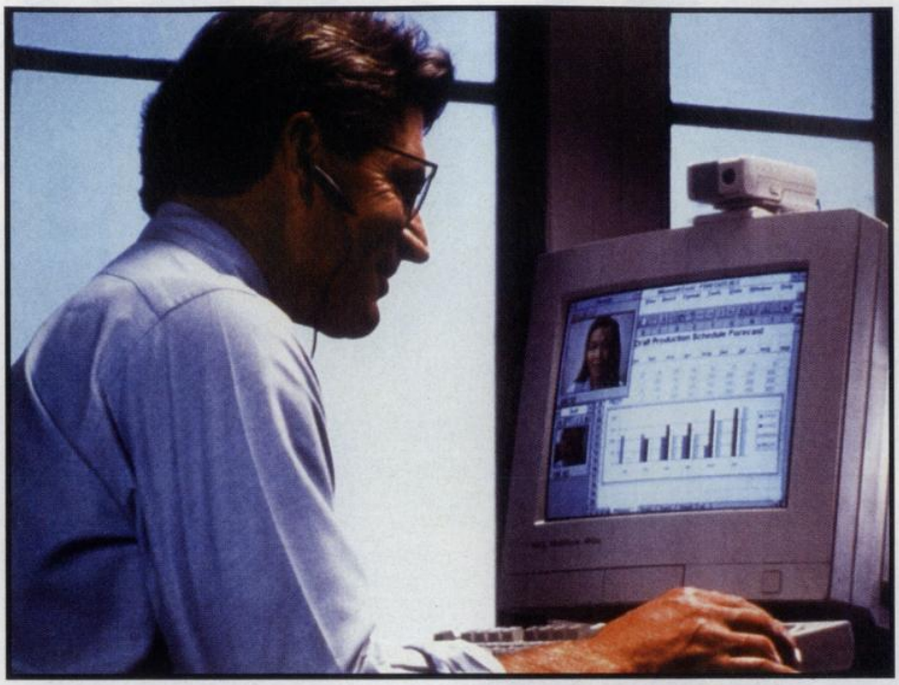
While conversing via your PC may be fine when two or more people are conferencing, when groups need to communicate, a small window on your PC becomes insufficient. What is needed is big screen vision, controllable camera equipment and high quality audio equipment. This range covers the high end of video conferencing, with a wide range of monitors from 21" to 46" which give full-screen images. Additional features include extra cameras with panning and zooming facilities, document cameras to allow members to view paper-based material, desktop control panels to control all this equipment and professional styling to suit all corporate, educational and institutional needs. In use, these systems still suffer from low frame rates that make moving images seem jerky and blurred, something that is accentuated on large monitors, but the system is workable and PictureTel systems are being used all over the world by companies and organisations such as Ford and Customs and Excise.

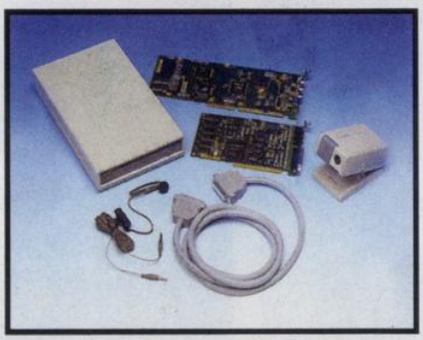
Creative Labs ShareVision PC 3000

Tel 01734 344322

This brand new product differs from its competitors in that it works over ordinary phone lines. To be launched shortly, it comes as a kit for under £1,000 and will work with any modern PC. The ShareVision is more than just a video conferencing tool, it comes with all the software required to share any Windows application between two remote computers. The video images of the two conferees are small but effective, the software is all easy to use and demonstrates obvious benefits. The package comes with two internal cards, a fast V.32 external modem, camera and headset.

When setup you use ShareVision as you would an ordinary phone system to call other people with a ShareVision system. You can talk, share documents and images from any application that runs in Windows. Quality snapshots of objects in the real world can also be grabbed using the cameras, making up for the small live video windows. The modem can be used for ordinary use such as Internet and BBS access.





The quality of transmission depends on the quality of the phoneline between the two machines. The modems negotiate for the highest speed, adjusting to provide the best quality. The picture can break up due to line noise, but the software corrects this. The hardware uses flash RAM so that upgrades can be distributed directly to customers.

mean that, when in conference, you are looking at a slightly jerky and sometimes blurred image of the person on the other end of the connection. His or her movements seem exaggerated and trying to judge body language or interpret gestures becomes difficult. Was that a shrug in answer to a vital point or was the person merely stretching out, doing something else, or what? Another problem is the background. If it's just a blank wall then you can focus quite easily on the person you're talking to, but if there is an area of activity behind the speaker then it can be very distracting. Using the systems in open plan offices must be pretty bad, especially if you have workmates who like to keep themselves amused. It's also distracting if anything particularly interesting is happening. Apparently, people from America conferring with the PictureTel centre in central London like to have one of the free-standing cameras pointed out of the window onto Trafalgar Square so they can watch the scene, the weather and the tourists wandering around. It may be fun for them but it would be most distracting while trying to hold a serious conversation. I assume that during important meetings the people invloved point the cameras somewhere more relevant.

I just wonder if the Americans ever threaten to hang up if they don't get their favourite view. I doubt the world is ready for crisis meetings over videophone where human tempers can fray and people can do things they'll regret later that they would have got away with over the phone. There also remains the problem of people wanting to look reasonable in front of an audience. Can you imagine the boardroom washrooms around the globe packed with preening executives five minutes before a conference?

Another problem that my male mentality suggests is what happens if you have fashionable female executives at one end of a discussion and a bunch of delinquent executive males at the other with a moveable and zoomable camera to play with?

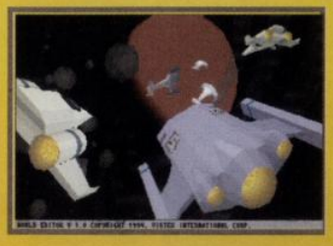
Another, more relevant, problem with current video conferencing standards is how the systems deal with background noise. At my first conference the person I was talking to was conferring over his PC-based system and his microphone was picking up what sounded like his computer fan. Sometimes the sound dropped out so the conversation continued in clear air only to return a little later. Not a conversation killer but it was certainly distracting. Similarly, when watching a Creative Labs demonstration, the time delay between either end caused an echo due to the sound emanating from us, coming out the other guy's speakers, being picked up by his mike and coming back out our speakers a few tenths of a second later to make a particularly distracting echo.

Ultimately, video conferencing is a solution to many business problems, not a perfect solution, but the technology will improve with time. Since there are now a few competing products in the marketplace, prices should be coming down to more affordable levels. Look forward to some reviews soon.

BT VC8000

Tel 0800 515550 (Freefone)

Another kit for installation into a PC is the BT VC 8000 which has the distinction of coming from the people who run the UK telephone network. Good old British Telecom itself is entering into the video conferencing market with its latest Vision Technology product. This kit is being supplied from several other manufacturers – IBM's is called Screencall and ICL's is known as Teamvision. The unit is available from B. itself, also. The kit comprises of the camera, the audio unit, which acts as a regular phone, and a chunky 16 bit ISA card.



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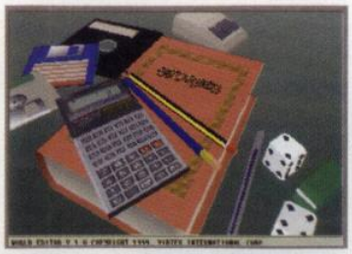

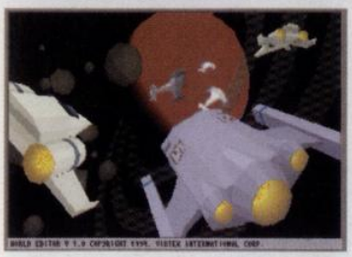

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Multimedia Weird

Step into a world of April strangeness – a world where multimedia meets madness. **Paul Mallinson** and **Geoff Spick** devour all that is weird.

AS YOU may have gathered, this April issue of *CD-ROM User* has lost a few of it's well-formed marbles. These pages detail a reasonable collection of the many weird and obscure multimedia titles available to MPC users. Some of it you can buy, some of it has been dragged kicking and screaming from the darkest recesses of the Internet, whether it's plain dumb or just a laugh, we've tried to include it in this roundup.

Regular readers will be aware of the breadth of specialist CD-ROM material available on the market at the moment. To the less discerning reader some of this software may appear pretty weird – you only have to look at some of the strange software coming out of the US (Bowie's *Jump* and BMG's *Head Candy*) to know what I mean. Multimedia software dabbling with all aspects of a modern, confused and sensation-addicted society is bound to have it's 'fruitcakes', as it were.

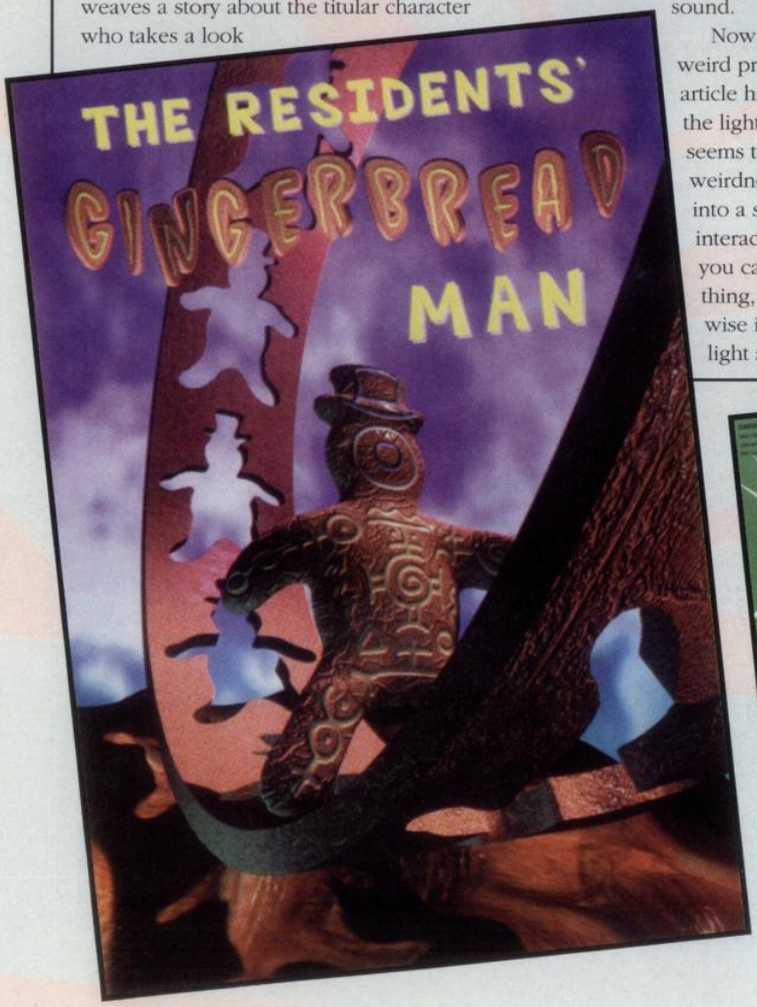
Here at *CD-ROM User*, we've had times where the team have stood around a single monitor scratching their heads in disbelief at some obscure piece of software with a thinly-veiled excuse for it's very existence. Demos too (especially some of the more libellous examples found on the Internet i.e.; the one's we can't use here) sometimes baffle even the most open-minded of us – take a look at *O.J.'s Race to Acquittal* by Banana Productions as our first warped example.

The Residents' Gingerbread Man

ION/BMG

YOU want weird? Well this is the place to be. *Gingerbread* proclaims itself an interactive concept album. and it comes from the same people who created *Head Candy*. Through music and colour it weaves a story about the titular character who takes a look into the heads of a butcher who almost died, a lonely elderly woman, a soldier who wants to dance with a memory and a confused transsexual, among others. The program attempts to convert their thoughts and personalities into light, colour and sound.

Now some of the weird programs in this article have been taken on the lighter side but this seems to take the 'art' of weirdness and cultivate into a serious piece of interactive multimedia. If you can take that sort of thing, then fine. – otherwise its just a fancy light and sound show.



Commander Blood

Cryo

Most of the titles in this round-up have been weird by our standards, but when the French want to get weird they produce titles like this. The sequel to *Captain Blood* on the ST (from many years ago), it takes breathtaking but very weird graphics, impressive music and characters (that probably rate as the weirdest creations ever seen on computer) and creates a game where the object is to see the creation of the universe. The two *Blood* games stand out as the most unusual titles of all time, if you ever want to play a truly weird game then this is it.

CD Mania & friends

Aristo-soft

CD *Mania* appears to be an attempt to sabotage your perfectly ordinary Windows setup. With it installed you can now cheat at Solitaire and Minesweeper – slightly weird I suppose. There are hundreds of weird sound effects, video clips, wallpapers, talking clocks and other Windows 'refinements.' In light of the other products in the roundup this doesn't really feel particularly weird but it may appeal to some.

Of an even less weird nature come the *Wired for Sound Pro CD* and Talking Icons, which change your Windows presentation around a bit, but they're hardly weird

On the other hand, anything that alters the boring face of Windows has got to have some merit.

Cadillacs and Dinosaurs

Rocket Science Games/BMG

CADILLACS is another of the weird multi-media CD games that keep gamers both happy and bemused.

Based on a popular comic book series and using two and a half D graphics (a sure sign of weirdness) the game puts you in the Cadillac of the title where you must avoid the dinosaurs and other hazards that exist in this strange world as you try to avoid a cataclysm that will ruin everyone's day.

Jeff Minter lives!

Llamasoft

IF you haven't heard of Jeff Minter then you're either very new to computing or there really is something wrong with you. In an age of huge budget games and production teams that number in the teens, Jeff Minter has gone it alone – producing the most playable, colourful and downright weird games on the planet. He started programming the early home computers like the Commodore 64 and producehis own versions of the classic early arcade games.

When the 16-bit machines turned up he created the wondrous *Llamatron* on the ST, Amiga and later on the PC which propelled him to fame, based on the classic arcade game *Robotron* it employed weird graphics, strange sound and gameplay in huge quantities. Its biggest attraction was that it was shareware and was probably one of the most successful shareware titles until *Wolfenstein* and *Doom* reared their blood splattered heads. It appeared on coverdisks and Bulletin Boards all over the place. Recently the PC version of *Revenge of the Mutant Camels* did similar trade, his ultimate product so far though has been *Tempest 2000* for the Jaguar console. CD quality music, thousands of colours, addictive gameplay melded to create the first 'next generation' console game. His next project is *Defender 2000*, a modern version of one of the greatest arcade games ever.

O.J.'s Race to Aquittal

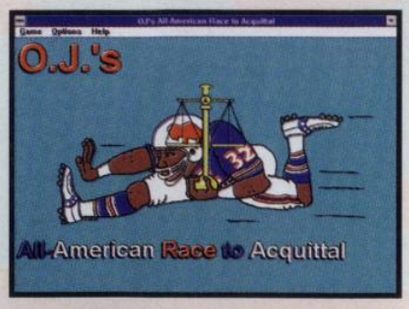
Banana Productions

WE did consider including the Shareware version of this little number on our cover-mounted CD-ROM, but thought better of it after consulting our lawyers.

Basically, what this game is is a Monopoly-derived board game in which we follow up to four O.Js in a search for complete freedom. Each segment of the board holds a surprise for unwitting O.Js and a small dice button in the centre of the screen determines how far you get to travel each move. You have to convince the twelve jurors that you are innocent, some of the evidence you uncover points to your guilt, others to your innocence. If you're lucky you can escape to Mexico, if you're unlucky you'll land on the 'Judge It' square with all twelve jurors thumbs pointing down.

While all this is going on you have to keep raking in money to pay off the lawyers and other expenses. Is that another Naked Gun movie on the horizon or an alimony demand? Other squares require you to answer questions about O.J.'s past, or the case.

Race to acquittal is weird in several senses. Firstly it's an incredibly up-to-date piece of software, when we downloaded, some of the questions even related to the previous weeks court proceedings. Secondly it's a weird concept – someone actually sat down and decided to write a version of monopoly based on a murder case? Finally its weird and playable at the same time. Go out and find this game now.



Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time and Desktop Pythonizer

7th Level

THERE are some people around the world who don't like Monty Python – now they *are* weird people! Us normal folk, on the other hand, appreciate the utter insanity of the Pythons and their totally insane, not to mention weird, creations.

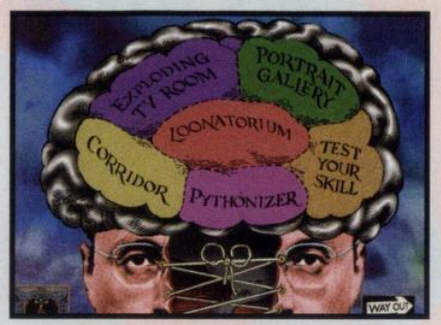
Complete Waste of Time uses many of Terry Gilliam's barkingly-wonderful animated creations, there is also the exploding TV room where you can view some sketches from the outstanding Flying Circus TV series. Scenes include chunks of the Dead Parrot sketch, Nudge Nudge sketch, Argument and Cheese Shop.

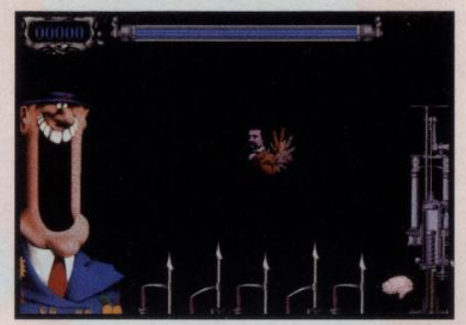
Add to this an array of heavily-armed solders, the Loonatarium, a pinball game known as The Corridor, the flying pig shoot 'em up with the famous cowboy animated character and the gopher game, you have, unsuprisingly, a complete waste of time. No benefits to your company here, no productivity to be gained.

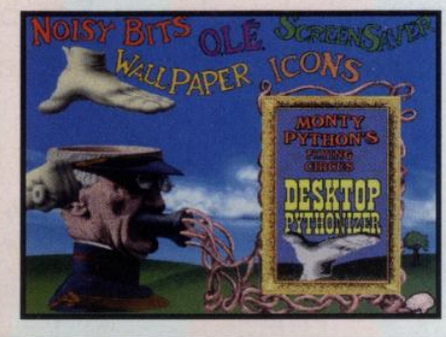
As is to be expected with any Python product, the bizarre is the norm and the humour is found in the oddest places.

The Pythonizer is the perfect antidote to the clinical feel that runs around any Windows setup. Throw away that neon colour scheme in favour of animated wallpaper that recreates those favourite Python moments, screensavers that save your screen while confusing innocent bystanders. If that wasn't enough you can also add OLE attachments that will frighten the life out of anyone foolish enough to open one of your documents.

Probably the best aspect of .*Waste of Time*, is that it is British weirdness. We understand the references, and also get to watch the rest of the world laugh along in bumbling incomprehension. Worth the price alone.







Paper Planes

Main Street

ARE Word Perfect Main Street completely bonkers? A multimedia CD-ROM that goes into immense detail about paper planes how to build them, how they fly, what kind of paper to use, and so on? In short; no, they're quite sane because this is one of the neatest CD-ROM products we've had the pleasure to play with. For a start you actually get to create something in the real world, something tangible you can play with and chuck around the room. The presentation of *Paper Planes* is excellent. The instructions are clear and precise so that even the most unsure-handed users can create perfect flying masterpieces. We await Main Street Origami with baited breath and reams of A4 paper.

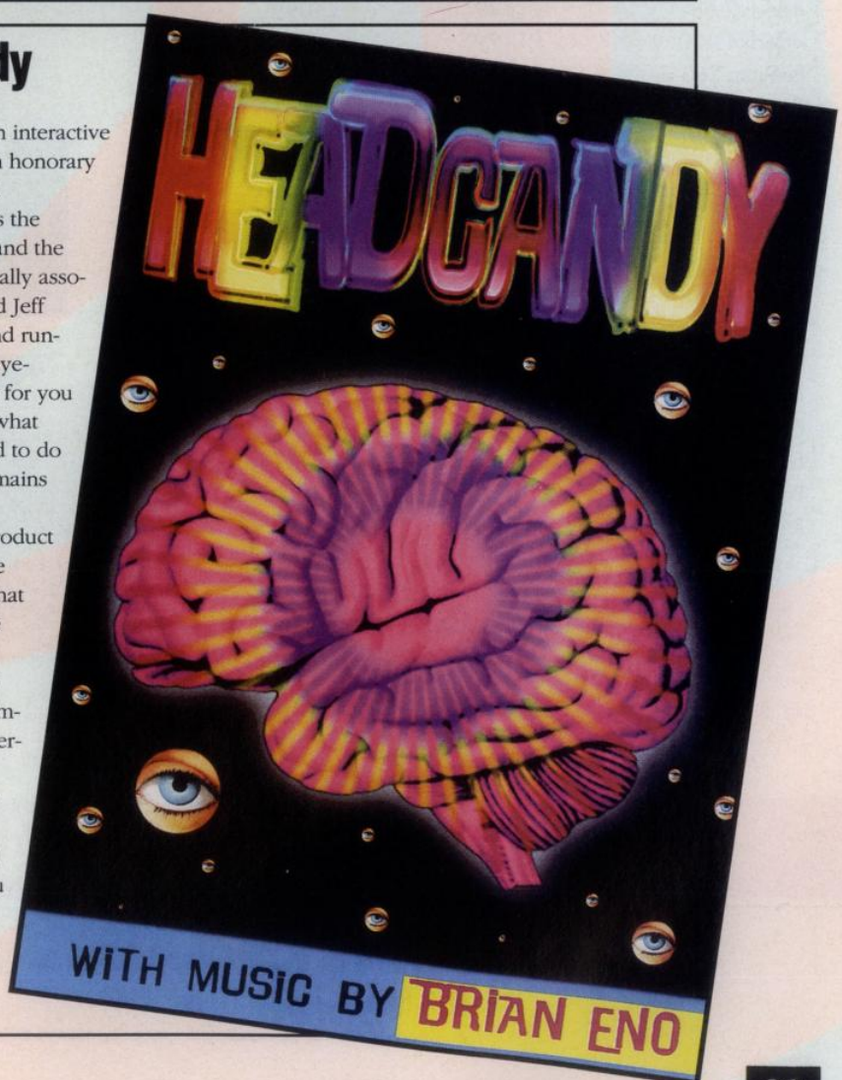
HeadCandy

ION

LEADING the field in interactive music and getting an honorary award for weirdness

HeadCandy takes the music of Brian Eno and the kind of graphics usually associated with raves and Jeff Minter games. Up and running it provides an eye-watering experience for you to groove to. Quite what else you're supposed to do with *HeadCandy* remains a mystery.

Interactive this product is not, but maybe the programmer know that what happens inside your head is more important than what happens on your computer. *HeadCandy* certainly provides an experience which is far more satisfying and with the special prismatic glasses you certainly get a stunning effect – as well as burnt-out eyes.



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Mouse	z-nix	z-nix
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The Tide is High

High Street shops have always battled each other for our computer-buying pound. **Dino Boni** compares two of the multimedia puppies they try and entice us in with.

WALK down your average English High Street on a Saturday afternoon, and you will no doubt come across one of the many mainstream electrical stores that have become the cornerstone of the white-goods purchasing community. For years, these chain stores enjoyed the massive profits that come with selling domestic appliances, but the world around them was changing. Computers were moving into the home, firstly in the form of games machines and later on in the form of serious home business and productivity tools. The console boom plunged these store chains into the twentieth century, and for the first time in their working lives, shop assistants had to get to grips with Mario and Sonic along with Kenwood and Hotpoint.

The rise of the PC as a home computer has prompted all these stores to exploit this new market and start to stock these machines. Many buyers are either not aware of the mail-order side of the industry, or otherwise do not trust spending about £100 with a company they've never seen, and more to the point, on a machine that they don't even know exists. While there will be a few black specimens in every flock of sheep, mail order is widely used by many knowledgeable computer users, but for the average person, it still represents an unknown quantity. Human nature fears the unknown, and so we turn once again to the High Street store. *CD-ROM User* brings you a head-to-head test of the two most common machines found in the high-street, just in case you were intending to be one of those first-time buyers on your next trip down the shops.

Packard Bell Executive Multimedia PC

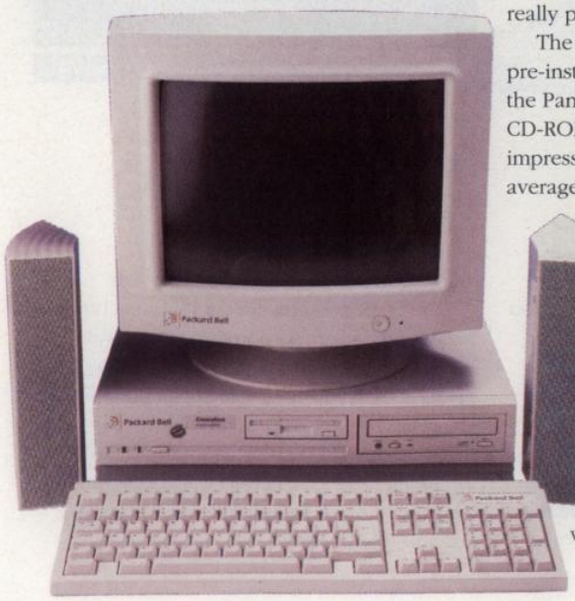
THE Packard Bell Multimedia PC has all the trappings of a top of the range machine. To look at, anyone even slightly in the know will assume that you have spent a fortune on your machine with its sleek looks, sculpted speakers and stylish desktop case. The case, apart from being well built, looks and feels sturdy enough to take the knocks that many PCs have to suffer throughout their long and prosperous life. The keyboard and monitor (the two most important external aspects of the system as far as I am concerned) are of very good quality indeed. Both look and feel very well made, and the keyboard has a positive click and bounce that makes fast typing a breeze.

The internals of the machine are pretty similar to the Compaq Presario. The video card is once again built into the motherboard, and emulates the Cirrus Logic family of adapters. Two free slots are available for expansion (one is already taken up with the Soundblaster 16 card) enabling a fairly easy installation of any proprietary card.

The processor and hard disk are slightly smaller than the Compaq, but the Packard Bell machine seems to make better use of the power that it has got. Windows moves at a very reasonable speed, and there is enough gut power to even run a hectic session of *Doom*, should you wish to have a break from the tedium of application usage. The software installed on the machine is not the most processor-intensive of packages, but this is an entry-level machine, so one can't expect to find fault in this department until something really powerful is run on it.

The CD-ROM drive is connected via the pre-installed Soundblaster 16 card, and is of the Panasonic variety (in my opinion, the best CD-ROM drive you can get) and has an impressive set of statistics. With a 297K/sec average transfer rate and a stunning average seek time of 196ms, this CD-ROM drive is powerful enough to run even the most ardent of Multimedia applications at a very reasonable speed. If anything slows down during a session, then it's the fault of the processor and video card, not this great CD-ROM drive.

The rest of the PC (except for the Speakers and mouse, which are very pretentious indeed) is fairly straightforward. The cables are colour-coded with their relevant sockets to aid the first-time user when he or she comes to connect it up for the first time. Overall though, the Packard Bell Executive Multimedia PC is a solid machine. It's well-built, attractive and comes with some of the best software and perhiperal hardware you can currently get, which can only be a bonus point in this day and age.



The Packard Bell comes with DOS 6.2 and Windows 3.11 as standard. You also get MS *Works*, Lotus *Organiser* and Sage *Moneywise* already installed on your hard disk. All the documentation for these programs are included with the packaging, giving the user a fairly solid footing for more or less any type of home office accounting or other such application. The Windows installation is left 'as is' for the customer to configure at his or her leisure, doing away with Compaq's idea of removing the Program Manager all together and substituting it for their own version.

Processor	Panasonic
RAM	4Mb
Hard Disk	340Mb
Soundcard	Soundblaster 16
CD-ROM Drive	Panasonic
Speakers	Supplied
Software	MS Works, Lotus Organiser, Sage Moneywise DOS 6.2, Windows 3.11
Price	£949.00 inc. VAT

Compaq Presario

The Compaq Presario series is a set of bottom to middle range PCs designed for the novice first-time buyer. Outwardly, the Presario looks the part (although it does bear a striking resemblance to the age-old Amstrad PCW) of a competent and well built machine.

Inside its tan case lurks a 486SX2 66 processor, which should be enough processing power for the average home user, but is definitely lacking when it comes to playing serious CD-ROM games or processor intensive applications like spreadsheets. The 4Mb of RAM has now become slightly on the small side, and 8Mb would have been preferable to see. Sadly, none of the machines on test sported this specification, and it is left up to the purchaser to upgrade the memory as they see fit.

A healthy 420Mb hard disk and a rather cheap feeling IDE CD-ROM drive provide the storage space along with the obligatory 1.44Mb floppy drive. The CD-ROM provided some pretty standard test results for a double-speed drive (Transfer rate: 248K/sec, Av. Seek: 281ms) but it left the impression of being cheap and flimsy. The same could be said for the mouse, which feels very tacky indeed.

On the plus side, the keyboard and overall general construction of the PC is pretty good. The monitor sports a selection of buttons for controlling the volume of the internal speakers, saving you the hassle of having to fiddle around the back of the PC for the sound card volume control.

The Presario comes complete with a built-in modem, which is a bonus for the price, although it cannot strictly be considered an essential part of a multimedia machine. What is an essential part of an MPC however, is a quick Windows set-up. Sadly, the Presario uses a slow Cirrus Logic graphics card and this, coupled with the relatively slow SX2 66 processor, makes using Windows for any serious multimedia application a real pain. The hard disk, while a reasonable size, is also quite slow.

The Presario comes with a fair amount of bundled software. The normal Windows Program Manager has been axed in favour of Compaq's Tabworks. Acting like a personal organiser, Tabworks arranges separate Windows groups into 'pages' of the organiser. There is also a strip menu at the side of the screen that can be used to hold your most-used application icons (such as a word processor and spreadsheet), thus eliminating the need to flip back and forth between pages.

Microsoft applications feature heavily in the software package, with MS Works and Money coming pre-installed on the machine, providing a massive user potential to this otherwise mediocre PC. The internal modem is supported via the Compuserve WinSim pack (also pre-installed) which comes complete with a special introductory membership offer for purchasers.

Overall, the Presario is an average machine, let down by the cheap peripherals and design. If you do not intend to do anything except manage your finances or write letters, then this is a good buy. If, however, you want to use this machine for any processor-intensive multimedia applications, then it's really a case of taking a sample of the kind of package you will be using down to your local Dixons or Currys and trying it out.

Processor	486SX2 66
RAM	4Mb
Hard Disk	420Mb
Soundcard	Soundblaster
Modem	Internal
CD-ROM Drive	Panasonic
Speakers	Built In
Software	Tabworks, MS Works, MS Money, Compuserve WINCIM pack, DOS 6.2, Windows 3.1
Price	£999.00 inc VAT

Conclusion

At first glance, these machines have very little to choose between them. Both offer a competent (if slightly slow) performance for a wide range of applications for the asking price. A first-time PC buyer will no doubt be attracted to the Packard Bell because of its good looks and its well-known brand name, and this may be a good starting point for choosing this PC. The Packard Bell, while having slightly lower specifications than the Compaq Presario, does seem to be the faster machine. It can be upgraded fairly easily, but only as long as you aren't hankering for a Windows accelerator video card.

The Compaq scores a lot of points for its compact and neat size and shape, but it still manages to look like a second-rate PC. The overall design and construction of the Compaq leaves a lot to be desired, while the Packard Bell, with its sleek, statuesque case and stylish speakers just looks the part.

The bundled software for both machines is really of more or less equal monetary value, but at the end of the day, I have to recommend the Packard Bell Executive Multimedia PC. It has the makings of a powerful machine, should the user want to upgrade in the future, and as it stands, it will provide the buyer with many long hours of productive and fun-filled use.

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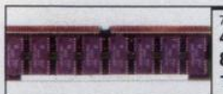

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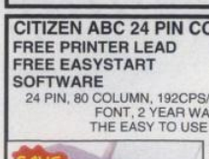

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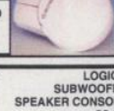

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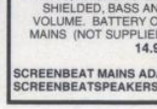

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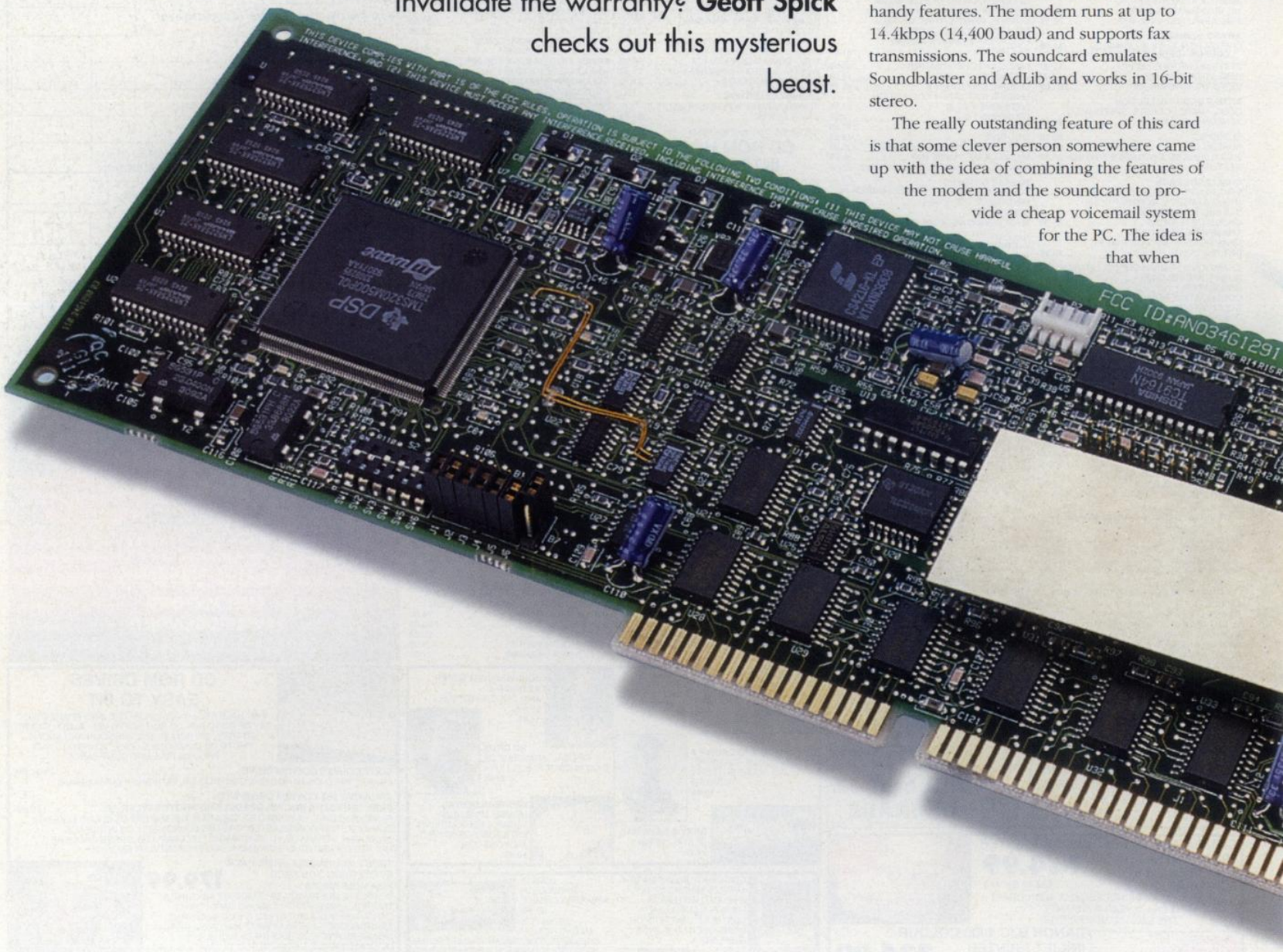
Chameleon

Multi – Function Communication Adapter

The chameleon is a cunning lizard that changes its skin colour to match its background. Surely PCs don't need camouflage? Will putting a lizard inside your PC invalidate the warranty? **Geoff Spick** checks out this mysterious beast.

ROMBO have taken a reasonably fast modem and a capable soundcard, added a digital signal processor and integrated the lot all onto one card. The result is the Chameleon, a multi-function communication adapter that is a neat 16-bit ISA card and which comes with some very handy features. The modem runs at up to 14.4kbps (14,400 baud) and supports fax transmissions. The soundcard emulates Soundblaster and AdLib and works in 16-bit stereo.

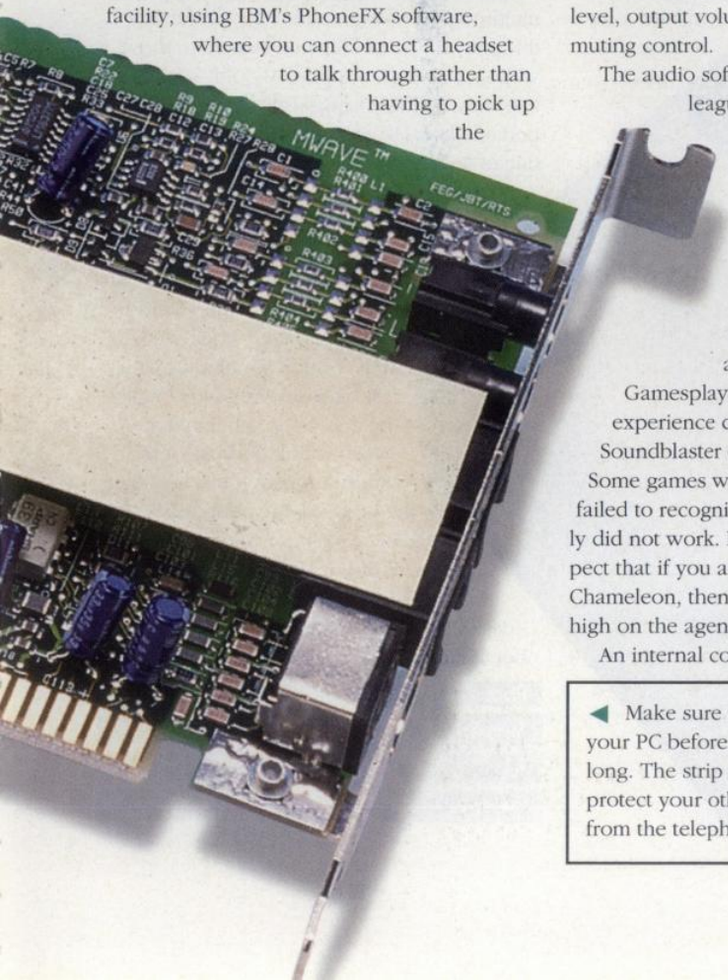
The really outstanding feature of this card is that some clever person somewhere came up with the idea of combining the features of the modem and the soundcard to provide a cheap voicemail system for the PC. The idea is that when



someone rings up and you're not around, the computer will act as an answering machine for you. (However, it is important to note, *before* you connect the card to your telephone system, that the Chameleon has not been approved for UK usage with public telephone systems.)

Simply record a welcome message, (you can store several for different occasions or times), and when someone calls, the computer will record the call, sampling it via the soundcard and compressing it via the DSP. You can come along later and listen to your messages – the program notes the time and date they were made, which is handy if you have been away for any length of time. You can keep the messages you want and discard ones you don't – i.e., numerous calls from telesales companies.

You can also hook in a normal phone alongside the modem and use that as normal or create a phonebook in Windows which will autodial numbers for you. There is also a facility, using IBM's PhoneFX software, where you can connect a headset to talk through rather than having to pick up the phone, leaving you with both hands free to type.



◀ Make sure you have enough room in your PC before buying a *Chameleon*, it's long. The strip of card is an insulator to protect your other cards from the voltage from the telephone system

Using Mwave technology software all the programs run under Windows 3.1. Using the frighteningly titled Discriminator program you can leave your computer alone, in a switched-on state, obviously, and it will intelligently receive faxes and take messages for you by running the appropriate programs.

Another handy way the Chameleon uses the DSP chip is with graphics files. The Image Viewer program uses the DSP to decompress JPG files at blinding speed, unfortunately that is all the application does, but it hints at some powerful applications for the card. Mwave Recorder is a sound recorder program which also uses the DSP to let you record sound at up to CD quality (44.1khz) and compress the resulting file at a ratio of up to 3:1. If you've done sampling before you'll know how much of a benefit this can be. Another software utility is the Mwave Audio Control which acts as a sound desk giving control over recording level, output volume, stereo balance and muting control.

The audio software is not in the same league as that bundled with a dedicated soundcard like a Soundblaster 16 or AWE 32, but it is highly functional. It has been used in the office as an interface for capturing digital audio from DAT (digital audio tape) for inclusion as audio tracks on a CD-ROM. Gamesplayers on the other hand may experience difficulties as the Soundblaster emulation is not perfect. Some games we tested with the Chameleon failed to recognise the card and consequently did not work. However, we strongly suspect that if you are interested in getting a Chameleon, then games are probably not that high on the agenda.

An internal connection allows you to hook up your CD audio cable to the soundcard enabling it to play through your speakers. External connections include audio in and out and a DIN plug for midi connections. The MIDI software includes Q-sound functions which uses stereo effects to widen the area from which sound emanates from your speakers.

The software includes a set of modem drivers which must be run before you launch a comms program. When run, either in minimised or on-screen mode, the driver displays a set of lights that represents the lights that would appear on the front of an external modem. DataFAX lite gets you set up for receiving and transmitting faxes over the modem. When set up to send a fax, all you have to do is hit the print button and it will route the data through the modem and to a fax number that you can specify or pull from the phonebook. You can do a limited amount of scheduling of how and when you send faxes.

Using the Chameleon isn't all plain sailing. Installation can be a little taxing, although the Chameleon is by no means the worst offender among PC accessories. There isn't a proper comms package provided, which seems a strange omission for a modem product. Windows Terminal is severely lacking in modern comms facilities and newcomers to modem use need more help than they get here.

Overall, the Chameleon is a novel product that provides many benefits and there is no real competitor product to compare it to, except perhaps a separate modem and soundcard. Even then you lose out on the voicemail features. The idea of voicemail may be attractive to small business and individuals, and with more and more people looking to get on the Internet the modem should come in handy in its own right. Add to that the useful fax facilities and the soundcard and you have a solid product that has many uses which comes at a reasonable price.

Price	£292.58 (£249 ex VAT)
Supplier	Rombo, 2b Young Square, Brucefield Industrial Park, Livingston, Scotland EH54 9BX
Tel	01506 414631
Rating	★★★★

MMU-2000
portable multimedia module

The MMU-2000 from SOTEC could be the answer to every portable owners dream. **Geoff Spick** dreams on.

WHEN this product came out of its box the office was stunned by its sleek lines and excellent design. So attractive in fact that Steve the Technical Assistant just won't stop caressing it – its almost obscene. Looking more like a Sony Playstation console than a humble PC accessory. The *MMU* consists of a double speed CD-ROM drive, soundcard and speakers housed in a silver grey case that will sit neatly on any desk and is pretty portable. It will connect to any portable PC with a PCMCIA type 2 connector. It can also play audio CDs independently via a row of buttons on the top of the unit. Also on the unit are a volume control, earphone, line in and line out sockets and there is an internal microphone for recording sound.

The unit can run from mains or from batteries. A rechargeable set are supplied, or you can resort to regular AA batteries. Connection to your portable is a simple affair if your PCMCIA ports are already configured. We were reviewing it on a virgin PC and it took some trying to get the PC configured to run with the *MMU*. Installing the drivers is fairly simple affair – select your portable type and let it install the necessary files.

To load a CD you pull the ejection button and the cover pops up. The mechanism feels a little plasticky but the lid feels thick enough to withstand normal usage. To install the CD you have to apply a reasonable amount of downward force to lock it into place. Shutting the lid will set the disc spinning on its merry way.

The audio applications within Windows include an audio recorder, mixing desk, chime, clock, reminder program, stopwatch and a library of sounds that you can add into your other applications (with such phrases as 'its time for lunch' sounds including M16s and cannonfire and various tunes) all sampled 11kHz mono.

The internal speakers of the *MMU* give pretty good sound quality. Being rated 0.9W output they won't exactly shake the room but they will be good for small presentations and general work.

The CD itself runs at the standard average access time of 320ms and can transfer data at 300Kb per second. The soundcard goes by the name of ESS688 and functions fine within Windows. It works in 16-bit stereo with a sampling rate of up to CD quality (44.1kHz).

With more and more companies like Texas Instruments looking to bring out their own multimedia docking stations for their own PCs this unit will be of immense benefit to those without big name support. My only concern is that since it doesn't physically attatch to the portable it has to sit immediately next to it – due to the short connector cable you require a fair amount of desk space for it to run, which counts out using it on British Rail and most aircraft.

Another limiting factor is its battery life of 80 minutes (for the supplied battery pack) and only around 45 minutes with AA batteries. You won't really be able to do much mobile work with it.because of this

So to summaise, this is one of the best-looking peripherals *CD-ROM User* has ever seen. It provides all-in-one multimedia for a reasonable price and looks excellent on any desk. If you are in need of the features it offers then I highly recommend it.

Price	£468
Supplier	Power Computing Ltd
Tel	0234 273000
Rating	★★★★★

Korg X5

Ged Start gets a MIDI keyboard/synthesiser to play with. His neighbours get ready to move house.

IF YOU are not heavily into music then you might think the name 'Korg' probably belongs to a character from a science fiction film. In fact, Korg is one of the leading manufacturers of electronic synthesisers and keyboards.

A large proportion of keyboards advertised for use with PCs are 'dumb'. This means that they have no sound capability of their own and rely on the soundcard in your PC. By connecting a dumb keyboard to your PC, it acts as a MIDI controller.

The next stage up is a 'voiced' keyboard. These come in all shapes and sizes from the little Yamaha and Casio models with built-in speakers, up to professional standard models from Yamaha, Roland and Korg. These rarely have built-in speakers, instead they need to be connected to an external amplifier.

Last year, I worked with a professional musician to test a whole host of voiced keyboards including the Korg *X4* which came out as one of the best. The Korg *X5* is the little brother of the *X4* and, while it offers less in some respects, it is an incredible piece of hardware. At the touch of a button, you can create your own orchestra with some of the best sounds I have ever heard.

Mastering the controls is not an easy task even for someone who spends 15 hours a day playing with computers. Fortunately, the *X5* comes with an excellent manual that tells you all you need to know. However, in the beginning, it's not necessary to consult the manual, as setting it up to use by itself is simple.

With a standard guitar-style audio lead to connect to my amplifier and the mains adapter (thoughtfully provided by Korg) I was up and running in seconds. The next three hours were spent playing with the range of voices. These ranged from the sublime – Grand Piano, Church Organ – to the ridiculous – 1950's Science Fiction Movie. If you have ever seen the Forbidden Planet, you will know the type of sounds it makes.

All of the instrument voices are well up to Korg's usual standard and I have included some samples of these on the cover CD-ROM. Launch the CD's menu system in the usual way and follow the instructions as they appear on the screen.

The *X5* uses two main sound banks, A and G. Bank A is a range of sounds unique to Korg while Bank G is the General MIDI sound set. While you can use your PC to control Bank A, this can cause problems if you try to transfer the file to another system. For instance, A69 is a complete drum kit, the equivalent General MIDI sound (G69) is a saxophone.

The *X5* doesn't have a built-in sequencer like some voiced keyboards, which makes connecting it up to a PC or other computer essential. On the other hand, it is fully programmable in the way that it can handle several sets of instruments in Combi mode. It is already set up with a full set of Combi sounds which vary from the multi-layered Full Pipe Organ sound to House Party, where the keyboard is split into four with a drum-kit, bass guitar, rave synthesiser and orchestra hit all on one setting.

For linking up to your PC, the *X5* has standard MIDI In, Out and Thru sockets using five pin DIN connectors. It also has a special socket to connect to a host PC. This uses a non-standard eight pin connector similar to a PS/2 mouse socket. You need a dedicated cable to use this port, but it will save you a lot of messing about.

Describing the *X5* further is a pointless exercise. There's so much to it and there's so much it is capable of, that you should visit your local music shop and hear one in action for yourself.

Price	£799
Supplier	Korg UK
Tel	0181 427 5377 (for details of nearest stockist)
Rating	★★★★★

MPEG 24

Ged Start tries out the 24-bit option for Video CDs with the MRV Real Video and Ace Coin cards

JUST in case you haven't noticed, *CD-ROM User* is a big fan of the MPEG standard. It's not perfect, it's still a bit expensive and who wants to watch a film on their computer anyway? We get asked this with alarming regularity by people who have missed the point.

When you use your computer how close do you sit to the screen? Most people use a focal length of around 24 inches to be able to read and analyse the display properly. Do you sit that close to the screen when you watch television? Many of us have 14in colour TVs in our homes and none of us would attempt to watch a film on TV at a range of two feet, so why should it be different when watching a film on a 14in colour monitor connected to a PC.

The arguments then range about the physical location of the monitor. Yes, to a limited extent this can be a nuisance, but not that much. After all, how long does it take to set a computer up in a new location? Unless it's bolted down for security, less than five minutes every time.

We here a lot of criticism about the way that MPEG based Video CDs suffer from picture break up and pixelisation. This can happen, but at a normal viewing distance, it is unnoticeable. After all, a standard TV doesn't look to clever at close range. So the next time you hear someone dismissing MPEG out of hand, give this some thought.

Now, what's so special about a 24-bit MPEG card? Well, apart from the fact that they are incredibly rare, the quality of the picture is just that much better. After the opening to this article, this must seem contradictory. Most of the MPEG cards we have tested work in 15-bit mode which means that they handle around 65,000 individual colours. A 24-bit card can handle 16 million colours.

This means that what you see on the screen is just that touch more vibrant. It's only when you see the two different types running side by side that you realise just what a difference it makes.

For the last few months, there has only been one serious 24-bit card on the market, the Ace Coin. More recently, Aerotech announced that they are importing the *Real Video* card manufactured in California by MRV.

Real Video

WHAT do consumers really want from an MPEG card? Stanley Ho, the man behind MRV thinks he knows. A card that can be installed straight out of the box into a slot, no internal video feature connector links, no jumper settings just plug and play.

That is what the *Real Video* card delivers. All the interrupt settings are handled by the installation software which automatically detects which possible interrupts are free and configures your machine to the optimum settings.

The link through the PC's graphics card is external. The full installation process, including software, took less than five minutes.

The *Real Video* can handle MPEG, Video CD and CDi video format discs (subject to the CD-ROM drive being able to handle the discs). Having tried a lot of other MPEG cards, I thought I knew what to expect, but no, we were stunned by the quality of the playback. That is why we arranged with Aerotech to offer four *Real Video* cards as competition prizes last month.

With an RRP of around £250 inclusive of VAT, there are a lot of cards that are available for less, but few that are as good. The finished products will include a bundle of Video CD titles, but at the time of going to press the quantity and nature of the titles was yet to be decided, but expect good quality discs.

A very tasty piece of kit indeed and highly recommended. The only thing that could improve it would be a lower price.

Price	£351.33
Supplier	Ace Multimedia, Ace House, Stafford Park 6, Telford Shropshire TF3 3BQ
Tel	01952 293999
Why?	Great picture quality, lots of tools and gadgets, not to difficult to use and set up
Why not?	Not as simple as the MRV, very expensive
Rating	★★★★

Ace Multimedia Movie Master 24

ACE is another relative newcomer to the world of PCs. When they launched the *Movie Master* last year (just in time for the Autumn ECTS show, they really created a stir.

Like the *Real Video*, all the interrupt settings are handled by the software. The main difference is with that it uses the *Video Feature Connector* on your graphics card. This of course assumes that you have a VFC to start off with.

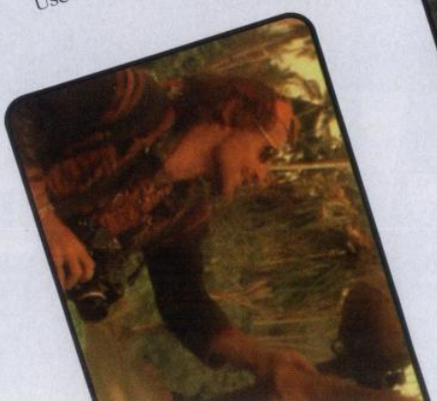
Some budget graphics cards do not have one at all and some top end cards like the Video Logic 928 *Movie* use a different system altogether, the VMC (VESA Media Channel). Because of this, you must make sure that your graphics card is compatible with the *Movie Master* before parting with your hard earned cash. The ribbon cables provided by Ace are not very long, so if your VFC is built onto the motherboard, you could have problems.

Use of the VFC is common to a lot of MPEG cards so don't make the mistake of thinking that the above is unique to the *Movie Master*. In fact, as the *Movie Master* proves, used properly the VFC can deliver. Picture quality from the card is excellent - it speaks volumes when some quality PC manufacturers like Highmead Fountain have adopted the *Movie Master* for their MPEG ready PCs.

The *Movie Master* is more expensive than the *Real Video*, but it does offer a variety of extra facilities including true scaling to any size in Windows and DOS. The price includes three Video CD titles; *Cats* from Dorling Kindersley, *Above the Law* and *The Twilight Zone*.

The *Movie Master 24* is going to stay as the flagship of the range and to support it, Ace is releasing four more boards to appeal to the whole market. The entry level card will be the *Movie Master Classic TV* at around £150 through the *Movie Master XL* at around £200. The spec for the *XL* is quite a way below the *Movie Master 24*, but at £100 less it should prove popular.

Price	£249.95
Supplier	Aerotech World Trade,
Tel	01628 34555
Why?	Great picture quality, simple to use and set up no worries about the VFC
Why not?	Not as many gadgets as the Ace, quite expensive
Rating	★★★★



Want to write a 3D game?

If you've ever tried doing fast realtime 3D graphics on a PC you'll know how difficult it is. Even the best programmers give up when they see the brilliant graphics in such games as Epic, TFX and Inferno. Imagine having access to the technology that made these games possible. Imagine a library of 3D graphics functions you can use from your favourite C compiler, Pascal or BASIC. Imagine a set of functions so powerful that you needn't know anything about 3D graphics to make fighter planes soar through the sky or send cars screaming down the road. This is 3D-Ware, the worlds fastest PC-based Virtual Reality Development Kit. Pre-production versions of the 3D library were used in the development of mega bestsellers like TFX and the brand new Inferno. The current version of 3D-Ware is already in use worldwide by amateurs and professionals alike.

The 3D-Ware functions are easy to understand and extremely easy to use, so instant results are within everybodys reach. To make life even easier the 3D-Ware package contains various applications, tools and filters, and 500+ professionally designed shapes from rocks to rocketships. 3D graphics has never

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- Gouraud shading* ❑
- Sphere drawing ❑
- Patterned line drawing ❑
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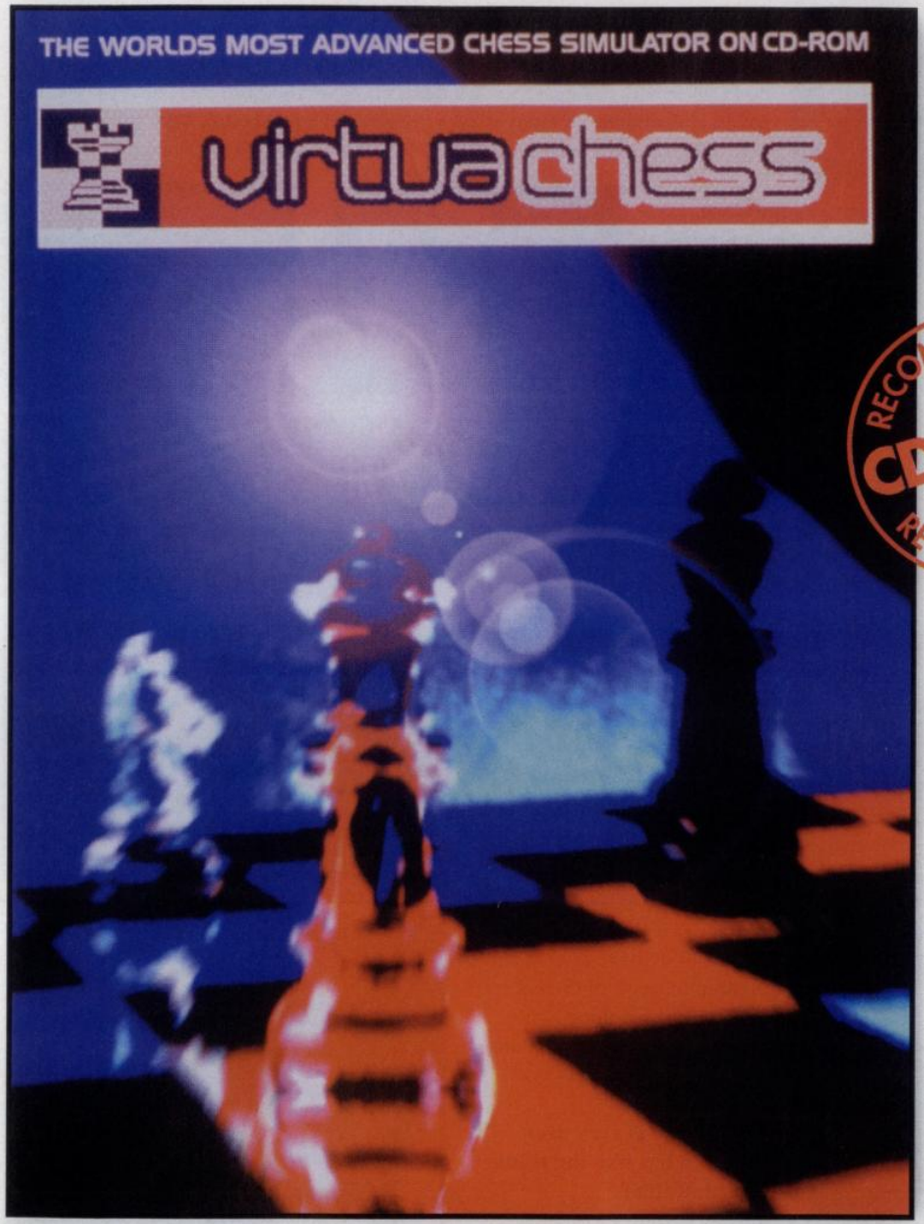
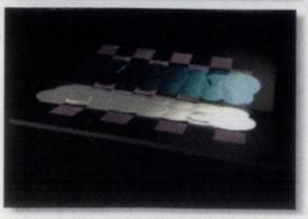
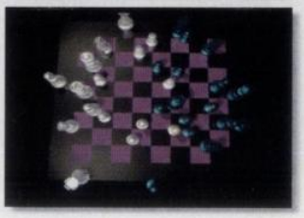
Virtua Chess







Virtua Racing's got nothing on Virtua Chess. **Paul Mallinson** moves Bishop to E4 and takes the Queen from behind for a Knight to remember.

IF ANYONE tries to tell you that a chess game is just a chess game, they haven't seen *Virtua Chess*. The latest release from French publisher Titus has taken us by surprise on many fronts. First and foremost this program is incredibly user friendly – PC beginners will have absolutely no problems getting the game to run. Played directly from the CD, *Virtua Chess* loads into memory detecting every facet of your PC's setup – processor, mouse, sound card (including port address and IRQ), network, video capabilities and so on. An impressive start, begging the question; "why aren't other developers doing this?" 'Plug and Play' is the way forward and Titus are definitely leading the way.

After the impressive, Silicon Graphics-rendered introductory sequence the player is presented with a neat Windows-style interface. Although a Windows version is in the pipeline, for the moment Titus are pleased to introduce their own WIMP (Windows, Icons, Mouse, Pull-down Menus) environment. The windows can be re-sized, dragged, dropped and arranged just like Windows, but there are other advantages. Selected windows can be kept active, even if they are behind others or partially obscured. What this means is that the active window, wherever it is buried among the others, accepts your keyboard commands – whether you're typing notes, messages or board moves (pE4, for example). Windows

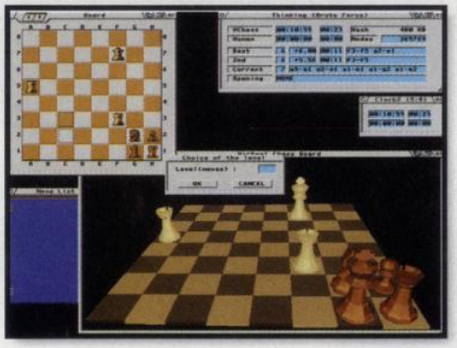
▲ **I've gone for a Bird's opening – but, alas, I have no knockers (I did say it was April...)**

can also be minimised or maximised to tidy things up.

A default board setup allows the player to begin playing straight away but head up to the top of the screen – hold down the right mouse button – and an unbelievable array of options spill out from a number of pull-down menus.

Loading/saving, screen environments (how the windows are laid out on screen) and network options grace the File menu. The Game menu goes into more detail. Moves can be replayed or taken back, from just the single move, to a specific amount, to all. The all-important play levels can be altered here too. There are four main levels of play; complete beginner, beginner, novice and standard.

Complete beginner is aimed at the PC user who has never played chess before in their lives. With this option activated the program highlights all the squares into which you can move your held piece. If you click and hold a piece (to move), the available moves are highlighted.

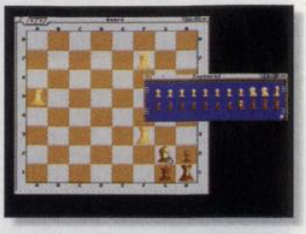


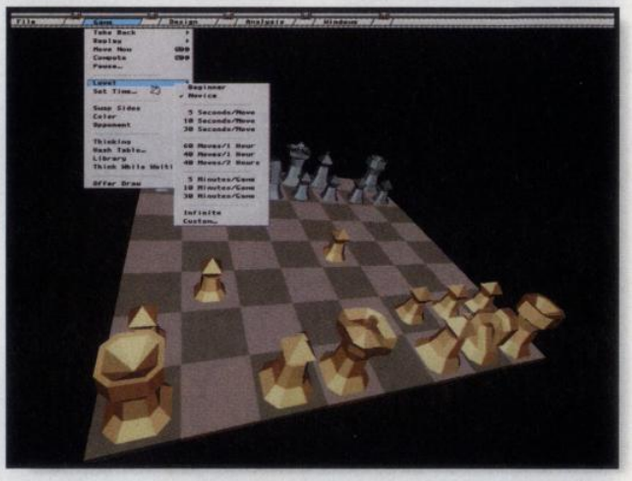
Beginner level hides more than at first meets the eye. Built into the chess engine are complex AI routines that adjust the difficulty levels as play ensues. What this means is that, if you make a bad move, the program will compensate by dropping it's intelligence levels. This way, you are able to capitalise on any errors and eventually learn by your mistakes. Needless to say, the program played badly against me until I learnt to plan my games a little more thoroughly.

Novice level restricts the thinking of the computer opponent to a depth of one move.

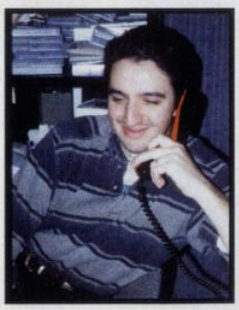
In standard mode the computer plays to the best of it's ability – restricted only by the time it is given to think and the number of moves ahead (the depth) it can calculate. The engine itself is extremely powerful and can be a fantastically tough opponent given the chance.

But a chess game would not have been given the tag 'Virtua' without some form of 3D tomfoolery, and *Virtua Chess* has something never seen before in a game of this sort; a fully-movable 3D board. With three types of 3D board to choose from (standard, Staunton





CD-ROM User went over to the periphery of Paris to speak with *Virtua Chess* Producer Eric Caen. Only after talking with Eric did we realise how much had gone into the game.



CD-ROM User: Who are the guys that developed the chess engine?

Eric Caen: Of the two individuals that developed the chess engine (Marc Francois Baudot and Jean Christophe Weill), one is a very high-level engineer and the other has a Doctorate specialising in Artificial Intelligence. The latter person has been researching AI for over ten years now and his main application has been chess on which he has been working since 1989 – *Virtua Chess* is really a culmination of over ten years of AI research.

How straight-forward is it to install and set up a game?

It is instant – you can run the program from the CD without having to fiddle about with the system configuration. In terms of drivers you don't have to do a thing – the program auto-detects everything from sound cards to networks.

The interface is very user-friendly. What was the thinking behind that?

It was our goal to provide the most user-friendly environment possible.

Was the Virtual 3D board difficult to program?

The most difficult aspect of the 3D routine to get right was the mouse projection. By this I mean; when lining up to select a piece, the computer projects the path of the mouse pointer in order to detect if it is hitting a polygon. Our routine is now pixel-perfect but it was extremely difficult to do.

How good is the actual chess engine in *Virtua Chess*?

It has an ELO rating of approximately 2450.

Put that into context - how does it fare against, say, Chessmaster 4000 or Kaspirov's Gambit?

It has beaten *Kaspriov's* every time – no problem. It's beaten *Chessmaster 4000 Turbo* at least 60 per cent of the time. The same with *Chess Genius* too. A chess specialist who has studied our game told us that *Virtua Chess*, on the standard setting, will beat 99% of it's opponents.

Also, at the CES in Las Vegas a representa-

It's 'voitually' real!

The Virtual Chess Board can be rotated, zoomed and changed through all three axes by simply moving the mouse around at will. There are even three different board styles to choose from – wowser!

and Inca) players will have hours of fun just rotating the 3D board and playing around with the pieces. The 3D is fast, effective and glitch-free (even running in 1024x768x256) and there are three different 3D boards to select from the menu. Of course, you can play the game using a standard overhead board view and most chess addicts will want to do this. Each overhead board style can be one of three sizes and can even be displayed in gorgeous 256 colours.

An Analysis menu has been provided to keep real chess fiends happy. The option 'search for mate' is not some 0898 chatline connection but a switch that forces the computer to calculate all possible checkmates from the current board setup. The *Virtua Chess* engine is so powerful that it can process more than a million-and-a-half moves every minute before choosing which it thinks is the right one. With this sort of power you can impress your friends by typing in the day's chess problem from the newspaper and blinding them with your chess wizardry... or something.

Overall, *Virtua Chess* is a must buy for beginners and experts alike – I'm no chess master but I learnt a heck of a lot playing at beginner levels mainly because of the clever AI that adjusts itself as play goes on. The graphics too are revolutionary for this type of game and the 3D board is fun to swirl around!

▲ **This happens quite often in Virtua Chess – me beating the computer, that is...**

For the serious chess player, *Virtua Chess* will test you to the limits and beginners needn't be put off either – the program is intelligent enough to help your game rather than taking great delight in crushing your every mistake. The 'plug and play' aspects of Virtua Chess enable anyone to concentrate on the matter in hand, rather than fight constant system conflicts, and that's gotta be good news for the centre-parter in a hurry!

Price	£39.99
Publisher	Titus
Tel	0171 7002119
Why?	Quite simply a must-buy for novices and chess addicts alike
Why not?	Why not indeed?
Rating	★★★★★

tive from Saitek (the company that developed the Auto Chess Board) visited our stand and he was interested to see how *Virtua Chess* was running. He started to play and I asked him if he played chess well. He replied with; "Oh, a little bit – I'm a chess master". I then said "you should be a good match for it" to which he answered "I should hope not" – implying that he would be better – and it beat him very, very quickly in about twenty moves.

▼ **Eric Caen (right) shows the Ed how to get the best out of Virua Chess and the Saitek Auto Chess Board**

What did he say to that?
He said, "Erm, I can't think like this – I'm not very good playing against a computer"

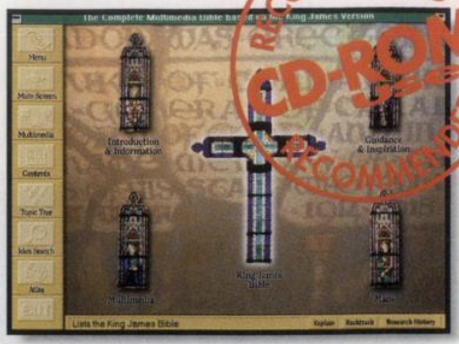
What sort of response have you been getting from really, really good chess players?
We entered a tournament ten days ago – this tournament was a human tournament with about 880 entrants – and *Virtua Chess* finished in 38th place. We were very happy with that, even though on the day we had a few bugs that gave us problems. We also tried it against the 1992 French chess champion and it won two out of three matches.

Eric than preceded to load in the pre-saved game of the very match in question. The replay showed every move that had been taken, right up to the point at which the French champion conceded.

Are you a good chess player yourself?
I used to be a long time ago (laughs).

How does Virtua Chess decide that the move it is going to make is the right one?
It depends on the time constraints imposed. On the Infinite setting it could take an extremely long time because it will think until all doubt is dispelled and it is certain that the move it is going to make is the best possible option. You can also force the program to move if necessary.

The Complete Multimedia Bible



The Complete Multimedia Bible based on the King James Version
Introduction & Information
Guidance & Inspiration
Lists the King James Bible

▲ The opening screen offers five routes of access – from the full Bible and onwards

WHEN multimedia software is done well, it really is a joy to use. *The Complete Multimedia Bible* covers a subject matter that, while interesting me from a fantasy point of view, does little else to inspire. Despite this, Compton's King James version of this most famous book is an absolutely stunning piece of multimedia design. From the opening menu (which entices the user in five initial directions) to the solid 'marble' slabs onto which the excellent Video for Windows film clips are projected onto, *The Complete Multimedia Bible* has the word "quality" written all over it.

The most important part of this CD-ROM is obviously the Bible itself – every chapter (both Old and New Testament), every Psalm and every word has been squeezed onto this disc, amongst many other extras. Other branches include Introduction & Information, Guidance & Inspiration, Maps, and Multimedia. An excellent feature of the Maps section is that, if too large to be fully detailed in a display window, a map can be 'grabbed' by the cursor and moved around at will. This seemed to me a superb little touch that many other multimedia programmers would have never even considered. The video/multimedia section too just oozes pure class. There are over twenty video shorts to watch (in any of three different screen sizes) all of which are very well encoded and play back at a more than reasonable frame rate. The icons on the side panel, when clicked, animate beautifully and you can even have the Ten Commandments read out by James Earl Jones (the voice of Darth Vader in the Star Wars films) if desired!

The Complete Multimedia Bible based on the King James Version
Job
13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:
14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:
15 And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.
Select an item

▲ The superb icons rotate when clicked upon

tion to your Christian reading habits then this product comes very highly recommended.

Price	£TBA
Supplier	Bastion, 18-20 St. John's Street London, E1M 4AY
Tel	0171-490 1323
Rating	★★★★★

Secrets of Stargate

THE blurb on the box says "The making of an epic adventure film". Now I'm not sure about anyone else, but I wouldn't really call Stargate an *epic*- more of a special effects extravaganza with a mixed-up and confusing story. But enough about my thoughts on the film – this CD has more too offer, especially to film fans who know their special effects.

The *Stargate* CD-ROM contains over 40 minutes of film clips, behind-the-scenes and special effects footage as well as audio extracts from the original score. It also contains almost an hour of video interviews, 466 production stills and 721 storyboards – and that's not forgetting the large amount of written information about many of the characters and others involved in the film. So there's a lot in there – problem is; while everything is great the first time around, I felt less-than-compelled to sit through the countless 'test' clips (complete with their inherent lack of sound) on a second occasion.

The program begins in the main hall of the Palace. Here you're treated to some wonderfully rendered 3D graphics as you wander from room to room and, of course, topic to topic. There are a number of Stargate-related subjects to explore; Movies, People, Storyboards, Art/Stills and Ancient Wisdom, each with more detail contained within. The

▲ Ask Kurt Russell about his involvement in the film: "What was the catering like Kurt?"

video interviews are good – choose a person (Kurt Russell for example) and you are then presented with a list of text questions to pose. Ask them that question and the video kicks in with your reply – simple and effective.

The overall package is slick and informative. For film enthusiasts like myself, I'd say that there's a few good hours of solid, information-based entertainment to be had from this CD. For others lacking thirst in such celluloid-related matters, I'd have to say avoid it – especially if you saw the film and didn't really like it.

Price	£34.99
Supplier	Bastion, 18-20 St. John's Street London, E1M 4AY
Tel	0171-490 1323
Rating	★★★★

Super Coach Rugby Union Challenge

THIS interactive learning aid is claimed to have been designed to assist pupils, specifically at Key Stage 3 (11-14 years) with the subject of Physical Education. The package essentially takes the form of a question and answer session on all aspects of the game – available for either one or two players to use. Subjects range from the history of the game – and the actual rules – to some basic statistical mathematics, theory and tactics. The answers are chosen by the user from a list of three possible options.

Each question makes full use of graphic displays and animations to give the user a more illustrated guide to the answers required. A question answered correctly is counted as a plus point – three questions answered in succession are awarded a 'try', and this can then be 'converted' by way of a bonus question. At the end of the game (a timed interval) each player's score can be kept, and can be used as a guide to their overall understanding of the game.

Various options can be chosen by the user at the installation stage, like whether music, sound effects and narration is required – a useful feature if you are trying to teach a large number of pupils effectively, and turning off speech that closely resembles Marvin the loveable android from "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" can only be good news.

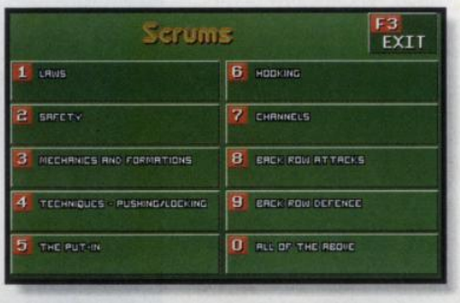
This type of interactive learning aid is useful in a number of subject areas – in the classroom or at home – but when it comes to a very physical, complex sport like rugby, I can't help feeling that practical experience on a pitch is the only sensible way to learn. If you want to learn the rules to the game, then this is fine – anything more and, well... Maybe this type of title could be described as computer-aided teaching taken too far?

PLAYER 1 0
0 COMPUTER
WHY DOES A SCRUM HALF USUALLY SPIN THE BALL WHEN PASSING TO THE FLY HALF
F1 REPEAT
F3 EXIT
F10 SOUND OFF
1 FOR DISTANCE AND SPEED
2 FOR DISTANCE AND ACCURACY
3 FOR BOTH

▲ Getting this multiple choice question correct will score a try

▼ Prepare to do battle as your team enters the stadium

▼ Get to know the rules of the scrum in this section



Price	£34.99
Supplier	Interactive Software Products Ltd.
Tel	192
Rating	★★★

The World of the Vikings

HISTORY wasn't my favourite subject at school, but for the sake of *CD-ROM User*, I'll cast my aspersions aside to view this latest interactive learning package from TAG Developments.

After a quick Windows installation, you are presented with the choice of two integrated packages: The Research Database and Evidence Boxes – the latter of which is by far the more presentable and informative and contains over 800 pictures from varied sources. You can use the useful navigation facility to quickly gain access to the structured subjects, including Settlements; Transport & Travel; Food & Drink; Power & Politics and Religion. Each subject contains a range of at least 7-12 pictures with accompanying text.

The ability to export and print out images are nice features, as is the bookmark – enabling you to save your position and return to it at a later stage.

The package has rightly resisted the temptation to go wild with animations and narration – letting you browse and read at your own pace.

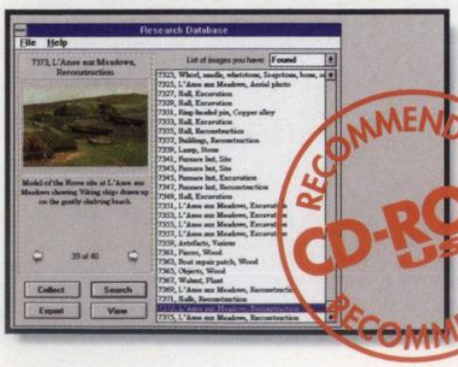
The Research Database takes a more detailed approach – allowing the user to enter specific search criteria from any field within the massive 3600 picture database.

Being a Windows package, The World of the Vikings is inherently easy to use, aided by good design, clear and uncomplicated screens, well presented and beautiful photographs. This is an excellent reference tool for historians of any age, although the GCSE course student will probably benefit most.

The World of the Vikings
File Edit Navigation Bookmark Help
York in England was a major Viking city. The old Viking and medieval streets of York are shown on this map in a darker colour.
STONEGATE
PLACE NAMES

▲ Informative information relating to the Viking town of York

▼ Did this unfortunate chap die in suspicious circumstances?



The World of the Vikings
File Edit Navigation Bookmark Help
Skeletons can sometimes show how the person was killed. This man had a hole in the head, possibly caused by a sharp weapon.

RECOMMENDED CD-ROM User RECOMMENDED

Price	£69.32
Supplier	TAG Developments Ltd.
Tel	01474 357350
Rating	★★★★★

Good from Bard

Neil King pulls on his tights, sits down at his PC and waxes lyrical about Attica's new Shakespeare titles.

IT'S BEEN said that as long as there are still English teachers Shakespeare will be read. Unfortunately too many discover the Bard Of Avon by being forced to read him for their exams. He is read aloud in classrooms up and down the country by pupils who would prefer to be reading the latest Pratchett. What most pupils miss out on is the chance to explore Shakespeare's work.

Occasionally something comes along that regenerates interest in his works. "Westside Story" was just one example. Simply by switching the setting to America and adding a few songs a new lease of life was breathed into *Romeo & Juliet*. The film retained all the issues of the play and put them in a modern setting.

A new modern setting has been found for *Romeo & Juliet*, as William Shakespeare finds his way to CD-ROM for the first time.

A collaboration, between, Attica Cybernetics, Harper-Collins Publishers & BBC Education means that three of his most popular plays, *Romeo & Juliet*, *MacBeth* and *A Midsummer's Night Dream* are all going to be released in CD-ROM format.

MacBeth & *A Midsummer's Night Dream* will be released later in the year, whilst "Romeo & Juliet" was released at the end of February.

Romeo & Juliet truly is multimedia at it's best. There are really two versions of the play on the disk. One is the complete play, in visual and audio form. The other an abridged video version that takes thirty minutes of video from the BBC production of the play.

In addition to that there are features on Shakespeare, his life and times. The theatre, actors and criticism and analyicism from a number of well known academics and commentators.

More important is that it is laid out in a way that makes you want to explore. The entry screen contains a hexagon with a central circle. Click on the circle and you're off into the play. Your other choices, consisting of background, plot, characters, language, themes and performance.

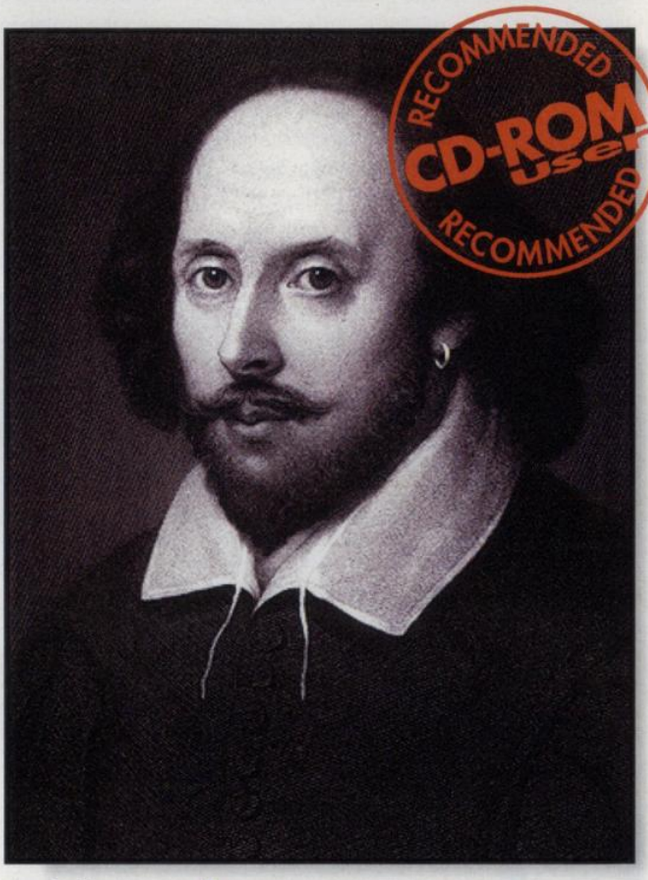
When you're in an option a menu bar appears at the bottom of the screen to allow you to move about freely with out returning to the hexagon.

Of these language is probably one of the strangest. Having clicked on the subject a drop down menu gives you several options and being a journalist I naturally first clicked on 'Bawdy'.

Here Germaine Greer, comments on the contrasts between the innocence of the two lovers, and the smut and innuendo of other cast members. A second screen then gives you menu of examples. Simply click on the quote to hear the audio. It was here that I found one of the few weaknesses of the package. Most of the audio clips are quite short and the accents of some characters difficult to pick up.

It's not something that matters too much in the body of the play as your ears quickly adjust. In the short quotes half of it has gone by before you start comprehending what is said. For most of the characters this isn't a problem, it's just one or two.

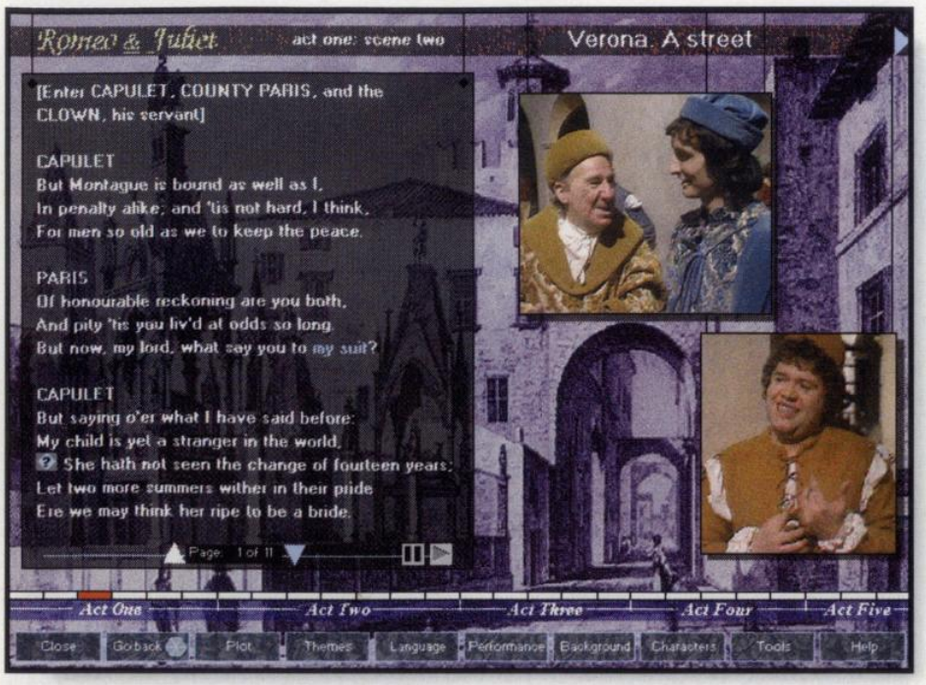
'Characters' briefly explores whose who, giving insights into why they act how they

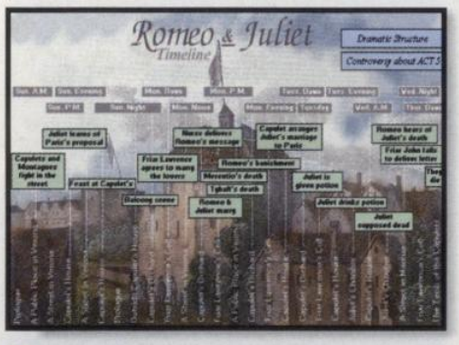


▲ **The great bard himself. If Shakespeare were alive today would he be into multimedia?**

▼ **Find out about the role of each of the characters in Romeo and Juliet**

▼ **The illustrations that come with it include early etchings of performances of Shakespeare's plays**

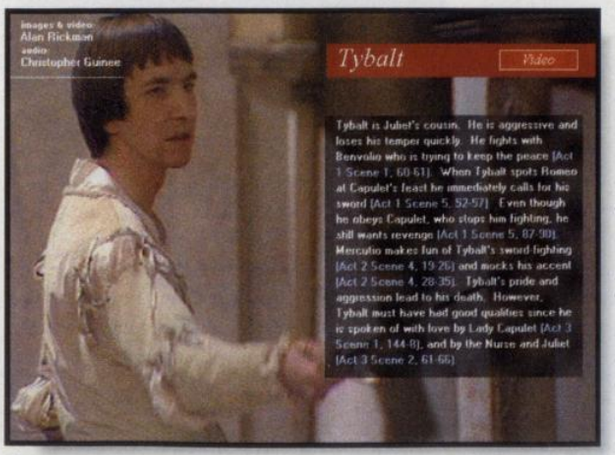

Romeo & Juliet
act one: scene two
Verona. A street
[Enter CAPULET, COUNTY PARIS, and the CLOWN, his servant]
CAPULET
But Montague is bound as well as I,
In penalty alike; and 'tis not hard, I think,
For men so old as we to keep the peace.
PARIS
Of honourable reckoning are you both,
And pity 'tis you liv'd at odds so long.
But now, my lord, what say you to my suit?
CAPULET
But saying o'er what I have said before:
My child is yet a stranger in the world,
She hath not seen the change of fourteen years;
Let two more summers wither in their pride
Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride.
Page 1 of 11
Act One
Act Two
Act Three
Act Four
Act Five
Close
Go back
Plot
Themes
Language
Performance
Background
Characters
Tools
Help



▲ GCSE students will find this guide to the play's structure invaluable

do. This is also the section that tells you who is playing which role in both sets of the play.

'Performance' explains all the aspects that need to be pulled together in order for a play to make it to the theatre. It is also here that we get an opportunity to hear samples from some of the better known players of the roles.


Images & video:
Alan Rickman
audio:
Christopher Guinee
Tybalt
Video
Tybalt is Juliet's cousin. He is aggressive and loses his temper quickly. He fights with Benvolio who is trying to keep the peace (Act 1 Scene 1, 60-61). When Tybalt spots Romeo at Capulet's feast he immediately calls for his sword (Act 1 Scene 5, 52-57). Even though he obeys Capulet, who stops him fighting, he still wants revenge (Act 1 Scene 5, 87-90). Mercutio makes fun of Tybalt's sword-fighting (Act 2 Scene 4, 19-26) and mocks his accent (Act 2 Scene 4, 28-35). Tybalt's pride and aggression lead to his death. However, Tybalt must have had good qualities since he is spoken of with love by Lady Capulet (Act 3 Scene 1, 144-8), and by the Nurse and Juliet (Act 3 Scene 2, 61-66).

▲ Why does Alan Rickman always seem to choose to play roles where he ends up dying?

'Plot' this is really a section for those who didn't do their homework. It's got a good prece of all the acts in the play. It also contains a timeline, which only helps to emphasise in just what a short space of time the lovers went from not knowing each other to dying in each others arms.

▲ The text for the play is accompanied by stills and videos of stage performances

The 'Background' section is split into three parts. Sources tells you where Shakespeare drew his inspiration for *Romeo & Juliet*. 'Criticism' comes from across the years ending with a number of modern criticims and starting with the first recorded Shakespeare criticism, that of Robert Greene in 1592.

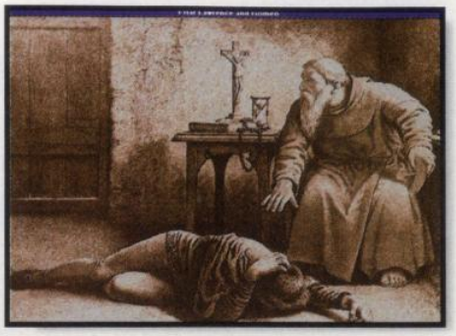
This is also the area where you can find detail of William Shakespeare's life and times. This information can also be accessed from a separate icon in the programme group manager.

Finally 'Themes' takes at love and the other aspects that weave their way through the play. What hidden agendas lie within and how these were affected by feelings and ideas of the time.

Inevitably though the jewel in an already glittering crown is the plays themselves.

The audio version of the play is accompanied by the text, the Alexandra version of the play. The text updates automatically as the audio version progresses. Words are highlighted in the text that you may want to click on for it's modern explanation. As characters appear on the scene their picture drops down onto the scene in the way scenery is dropped in the theatre.

Occasionally another box marked video appears and by clicking on it you get the BBC version of that scene. Even though the video box is small, you still get a good sense of the action. As the cast contains the likes of Alan Rickman, John Gielgud, Michael Horden, with Rebbeca Saire and Patrick Ryecart in the title roles, the delivery is excellent..



▲ The only problem with Shakespeare's plays is that you always know the ending

Quite simply the whole package is best described as stunning. Both versions of the play are excellently performed. The package is designed in such a way that you feel it almost your duty to explore it. If Shakespeare was taught in such an exciting way as this than perhaps he wouldn't be considered as stuffy by a fair slice of the population.

As it is I find myself looking forward to *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and *MacBeth* with an increased sense of anticipation. As Shakespeare himself once said, "A hit, a very palpable hit."

▼ One of the earliest photographs of an actress playing the role of Juliet from the 19th century

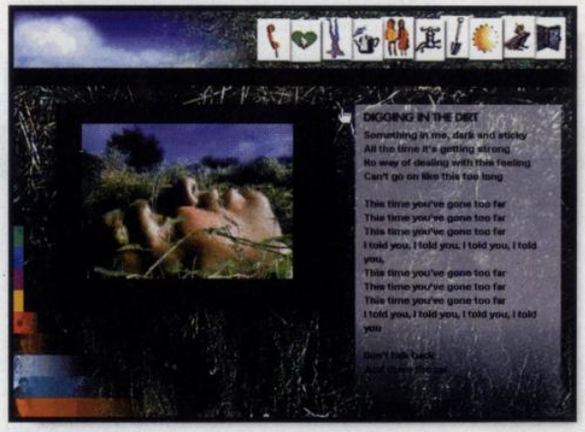
Price	£49 (Home version)
Publisher	Attica Cybernetics
Tel	01865 791346
Why?	Excellent edutainment value
Why not?	It's not Pratchett
Rating	★★★★★

Xplora 1

After the disappointment of David Bowie's 'Jump', **Dino Boni** looks at a CD that proves that this kind of interactive disc is moving in the right direction.

MUSIC hasn't really changed that much in the past 20 years or so; it's the technology surrounding it that has undergone such radical change that it is no longer distinguishable from its forefathers. The 'Music Video' revolutionised the way we perceive individual songs, many of which are now remembered for their videos rather than standing on the own two musical feet. As the years have passed, music videos have become more and more elaborate, using computers and advanced photography process to make each video more and more like a mini-film.

▼ **Digging in the Dirt was one of Peter's more controversial hits from the 'Us' album. The entire video is included on the CD for you to enjoy**


DIGGING IN THE DIRT
Something in me, dark and sticky
All the time it's getting strong
No way of dealing with this feeling
Can't go on like this too long
This time you've gone too far
This time you've gone too far
This time you've gone too far
I told you, I told you, I told you, I told you,
This time you've gone too far
This time you've gone too far
This time you've gone too far
I told you, I told you, I told you, I told you

With the advent of cheap, MPC computers, a few recording artists have turned their attentions towards this new and exciting market.

Subtitled 'Peter Gabriel's Secret World', this CD has been a year in the making, combining 100 minutes of video, 30 minutes of audio and over 100 still pictures into an insight into Peter's mind. The CD can be played in one of two ways. The 'Explore' option allows you to roam free around the program, clicking on icons and generally exploring. The 'Watch' option, on the other hand, takes you on a guided tour of the finer points on the disk, should you want to look around the *Xplora1* disc hands-free.

The instructions are very simple, and for a good reason too – Peter wants you to discover the disc for yourself and find out how it works with only the most rudimentary of instructions to go by. This can lead to prolonged bouts of frustration when you can't find your way around, but it gets better with practise.

Booting up the game presents you with the main menu which (like the entire CD) has been subject to a massive amount of design work. Selecting the 'Explore' mode is the only real way to play this CD, but before you can go any further, Peter appears in the top-right hand corner of the screen and informs you that you have to complete a small puzzle before being allowed to continue. The puzzle consists of an Identikit picture of Peter minus his eyes, nose and mouth. Rearrange him and he replies "That's smashing. Thanks for putting me back together". Nice. Real World have really excelled themselves in the presentation of *Xplora1*, combining beautiful visuals with some equally impressive video footage. The full-length videos included on the disc (Steam, Digging in the Dirt and Kiss That Frog) have been digitised very well, so it really depends on the specification of your machine as to how well it replays. Needless to say, an accelerated Windows video card is probably a very good bet. The sound from the snippets of Peter Gabriel (he pops up every now and then to offer advice) is slightly erratic.

▼ **Find the right door, and you can help this young man to re-mix a special version of 'Digging in the Dirt'**

The video sections of the CD are well worth viewing, especially the Real World Studio tour. Walking around the studio complex allows you to visit different rooms, including the remixing studio where you can fiddle around with a special version of 'Digging in the Dirt', abet only musically.

Xplora1 is definitely aimed at those people who love Peter's music and is the one of the better musician-orientated CDs available at the moment. But while the medium is ideal for this kind of project, I think the science still has a long way to go before being accepted as the next stage in musical entertainment.

A special collector's edition of the *Xplora1* Cd has also been released. Entitled 'Four Worlds', the package includes the *Xplora1* CD plus a double audio CD entitled 'Peter Gabriel – Live'. You also get a 60-minute VHS video of the concert, plus another perfectly designed book on the man himself. As you've probably gathered, it costs slightly more than the stand-alone *Xplora1*, and can be yours for the measly sum of £79.99

Price	£49.99
Supplier	Mirage, 14 Moody Street, Congleton, Cheshire, CW12 4AP.
Tel	01260 299909
Rating	★★★★

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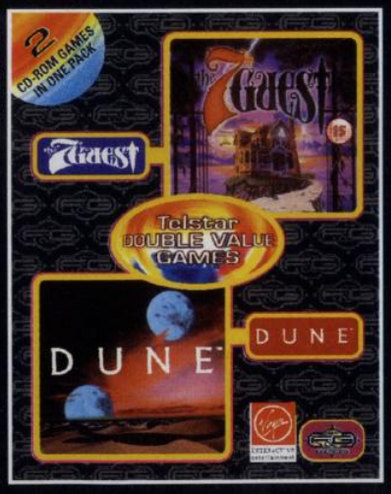

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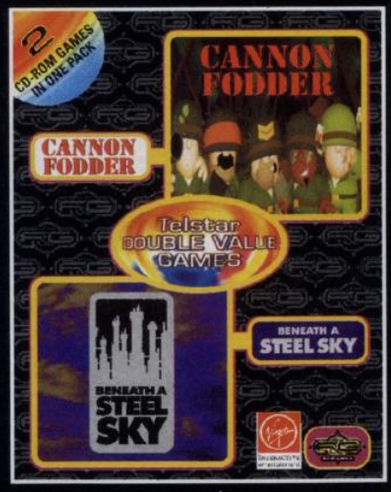

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Compton's Interactive Encyclopaedia

Jason Spiller attempts to interest us in a set of leather-bound, gold-embossed encyclopaedias.

BEFORE double glazing and cavity wall insulation surely the least desirable selling job must be that of the door-to-door encyclopaedia salesman. Inbetween the Herculean task of dragging around two hundred weight of leather-bound, gold embossed journals ranging from Aardvark to Zootopia, there was the tricky science of trying to convince everyday folk, whose quest for knowledge stretched to knowing the runners and riders for the three-thirty at Chepstow or the price of prime beef mince, that thirty-six convenient payments was an insignificant sum to pay for a wealth of knowledge that will grow and grow... and, undoubtedly, grow.

Still, many a collection of encyclopaedia with sleeves strangely unblemished through the passage pages that remain unthumbed, handsomely grace the book shelves of the land. It poses the question, does such a vast source of information have a place in every-day life, short of nipping home for reference during the jackpot pub quiz? Well, thanks to CD-ROM technology, both price and sheer mass have diminished considerably. Compton, established purveyor of all things encyclopaedic, no doubt looked up the term 'Interactive' as "continuous two-way transfer of information between a user and the central point of a communication system", identified a spurious link and set some poor hapless programmer the task of transferring the infinite well of wisdom from page to CD-ROM.

▲ **The main menu screen offers all of the above options from Explore to Notebook**

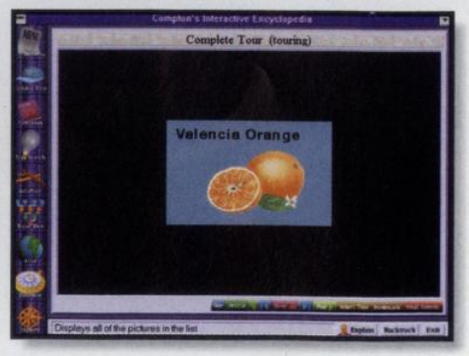
Compton's on CD is a statistician's dream. The Tardis-like CD-ROM has been stuffed with so much information as to defy belief. "Over 35,000 articles" it boasts, "a staggering 26 volume encyclopaedia" it blusters. Agreed, it sounds an imposing and foreboding proposition. But include the more user-friendly frills associated with multimedia such as; 8,000 illustrations and pictures, 100 full-motion videos, 3-D animations and 15 hours of sound and the whole outlook is far less bleak.

Your tour guide through this vast encyclopaedic world is none other than Patrick

▲ **As with all of the current Compton releases this encyclopaedia is very well designed and realised**

▼ **The full motion video segments can be switched between three available window sizes**

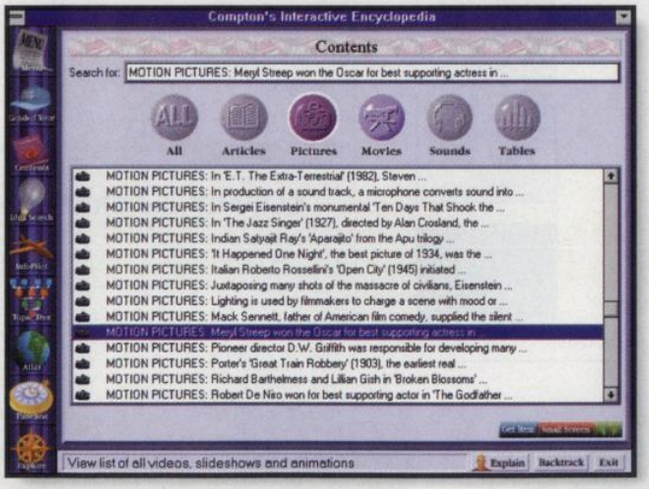
▼ **Tour your way through a plethora of oranges, spam, oranges and spam**



Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia
VERSAILLES, PALACE OF
The palace at Versailles, in France, was built chiefly by Louis Le Vau and Jules
Contents
Search for: VERSAILLES, PALACE OF: The Versailles
VERSAILLES, PALACE OF: The Petit Trianon
Verschaffelt, Pieter Anton
Verse
VERSAILLES, PALACE OF
The palace at Versailles, in France, was built chiefly by Louis Le ...
VERSAILLES, PALACE OF. About 13 miles (21 kilometers) southwest of Paris, in the city of Versailles, stands the largest palace in France. It was built because of the consuming envy of King Louis XIV, and once completed it became the object of envy of every other monarch in Europe. The Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, Schönbrunn in Vienna, and Herrenchiemsee in Bavaria are only three of the royal palaces built in imitation of the Palace of Versailles. Versailles itself served as a royal residence for a little more than a century—from 1682 until 1789, when
Expands this item to full screen
Explain
Backtrack
Exit

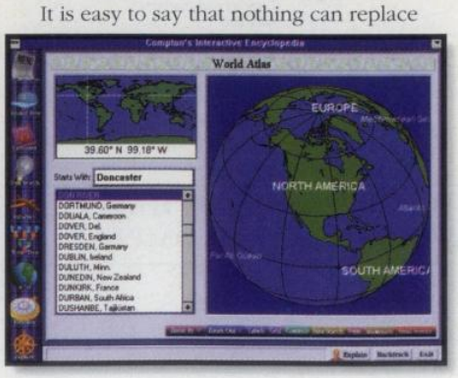
▲ **The thousands of pages of text are, more often than not, accompanied by plenty of clear pictures**

Stewart, the follicly-challenged, erstwhile skipper of the USS Enterprise, Jean Luc Piccard. Patrick plots a steady course through three main platforms of the program which in turn provides access to sub-platforms. From first base, *Compton's* commences with a merciless barrage of facts and information right from the Contents section. Here is featured an adhock potpourri collection of articles, pictures, movies, sounds and other information – not necessarily the sort of stuff you've been desperate to learn but nevertheless it's interesting stuff. More unusual is the so-called Idea Search which surrenders even more unusual and seemingly unconnected information. Here you can type any word, phrase, topic or question and even inform the program as to how you wish the information to be relayed; article form, pictures, movie sounds and tables all of which will refer to the subject in question. The program looks through the encyclopaedia for the key words in the request such as 'Kennedy Assassination', 'Lee Harvey Oswald', and a list of related information presents itself. Similar in concept to Idea Search is Info Pilot which on request presents related topics in newspaper form.


Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia
Contents
Search for: MOTION PICTURES: Meryl Streep won the Oscar for best supporting actress in ...
All
Articles
Pictures
Movies
Sounds
Tables
MOTION PICTURES: In 'E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial' (1982), Steven ...
MOTION PICTURES: In production of a sound track, a microphone converts sound into ...
MOTION PICTURES: In Sergei Eisenstein's monumental 'Ten Days That Shook the ...
MOTION PICTURES: In 'The Jazz Singer' (1927), directed by Alan Crosland, the ...
MOTION PICTURES: Indian Satyajit Ray's 'Aparajito' from the Apu trilogy ...
MOTION PICTURES: 'It Happened One Night', the best picture of 1934, was the ...
MOTION PICTURES: Italian Roberto Rossellini's 'Open City' (1945) initiated ...
MOTION PICTURES: Juxtaposing many shots of the massacre of civilians, Eisenstein ...
MOTION PICTURES: Lighting is used by filmmakers to charge a scene with mood or ...
MOTION PICTURES: Mack Sennett, father of American film comedy, supplied the silent ...
MOTION PICTURES: Meryl Streep won the Oscar for best supporting actress in ...
MOTION PICTURES: Pioneer director D.W. Griffith was responsible for developing many ...
MOTION PICTURES: Porter's 'Great Train Robbery' (1903), the earliest real ...
MOTION PICTURES: Richard Barthelmess and Lillian Gish in 'Broken Blossoms' ...
MOTION PICTURES: Robert De Niro won for best supporting actor in 'The Godfather' ...
View list of all videos, slideshows and animations
Explain
Backtrack
Exit

▼ **The menu bar at the top of the screen opens up further options, enabling more detailed searches**

Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia
Contents
Search for: KUWAIT: Flag of Kuwait
KUWAIT. The tiny desert nation of Kuwait was a quiet Middle Eastern country until August 1990, when it was invaded and annexed by its much larger northern neighbor, Iraq. This act of aggression was met with force by a United Nations coalition, and a short war in early 1991 freed Kuwait. Although liberated, the country had been heavily damaged—more than
Allows you to create multimedia presentations
Explain
Backtrack
Exit



The most obvious application would be a presentation of a project or college thesis.

It is easy to say that nothing can replace good old fashioned book research. Libraries are wonderful places. Of course it is not Compton's intention to deter reading as it is ninety-five percent of their business. But there is something almost futuristic about having volumes of encyclopaedic information on a disk that you would have trouble sitting a coffee cup on. Critics will say that there are more straightforward ways of retrieving reference material and information, anyone over twelve has been educated in such fact-finding methods.

Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia
PLANETS
The Jovian System
Jupiter was photographed by Voyager 1 on Jan. 9, 1979, from a distance of more than 34 million miles.
Jupiter is larger than all the other planets combined. It gives off nearly twice as much energy as it receives from the sun—heat that was acquired during the planet's accretion as well as heat that is generated as the planet gradually contracts. Jupiter also has the strongest magnetic field of all the planets. The field extends out to ten times the planet's radius and is the source of intense bursts of radio noise.
Jupiter
Jupiter is composed mostly of hydrogen and helium. It has no solid surface, only layers of gaseous clouds.
Contents
Search for: Moons of Jupiter
Mexico's Recent Presidents
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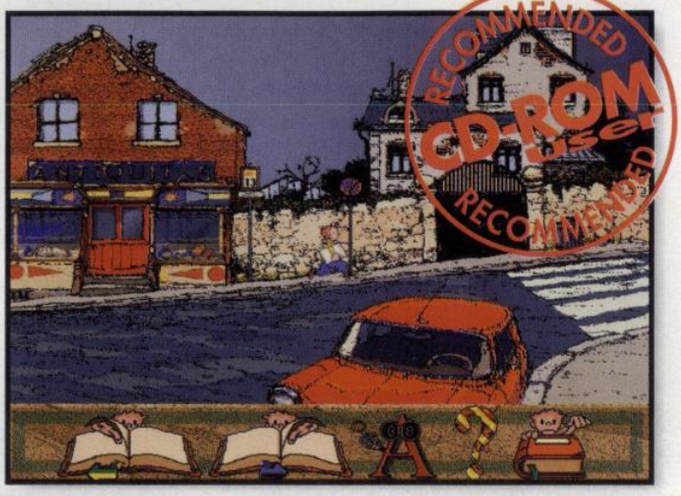
Uncle Archibald

Coktel's Playtoons are in the forefront of the edutainment market. No matter how much you hate the 'E' word the product is still pretty impressive. **Geoff Spick** visits the strange world of Uncle Archibald.

UNCLE *Archibald* is aimed at four to ten year olds and requires a 486 SX with CD-ROM and Windows 3.1. It runs in 640*480 SuperVGA at 256 colours. If you run your Windows at 800*600 then it'll run, but I recommend changing to the lower resolution for better full-screen graphics. Installation is fairly simple except that when you run the program for the first time you have to put up with a very strange graphics speed test utility that takes a couple of minutes to run.

When you finally load the game and get past the intro screens you are presented with a graphical menu with which the child can interact via the mouse. The child can choose to run either the *Uncle Archibald* story or the construction game. These are two distinctly different parts of the package, the story runs like an ordinary PC adventure game, although there is less interaction. The story uses flip screens between locations with very good quality narration and excellent sound effects coming off the CD. You can go backwards and forwards within the story by clicking on icons at the bottom of the screen and hear the narration, a single word or group of words repeated just by clicking on the required text.

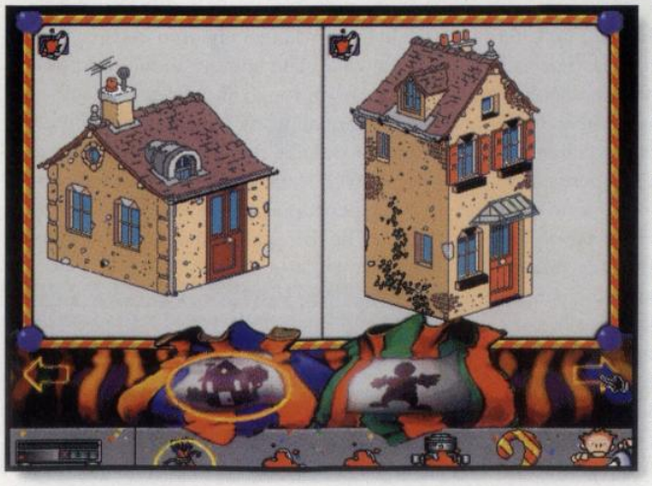
Uncle Archibald owns a house with an antique store in which Peter and his best friend Ben are left alone where they conduct a 'funny' chemistry experiment to find a super formula. The house is full of stories and mystery, and, since their experiment went wrong and filled the house with a strange mist – now it's full of Fringall the Ogre and his friends, with or without pimples. I won't spoil the story but it was good enough that the office came to a standstill when it was running, although most attention was paid to the monsters assaulting each other in a variety of humourous ways. The monsters antics are excellent and naturally there is a happy ending (if a bit wimpy in my opinion).



▲ Uncle Archibald writes the stories from which the monsters come from

▲ Find out about the monsters on your computer – each has it's own characteristic nature

The construction part of the program should keep the children busy when they get bored with the story because it lets them create locations using the graphics and characters from the story. Using a simple menu and point and click system children can change or move the sky, background, location, objects and characters within a scene at will. Using video recorder-like functions the scene can be turned into a story with each screen becoming a page within which the action occurs. Even though the icons are simplified, younger children may find them a touch difficult to pick up, but it should soon become second nature. There is on line help to deal with in-game problems and some well drawn Load and Save icons with which to store and retrieve your work. You can also print out and play back previously saved stories.



Overall, everything about this product is outstanding. The characters, animations, sounds and narrations are top notch. The creation section should keep young minds occupied for a long time and offers a wide variety of scenes. My only criticism is that the story could be a little longer and the nature of CD-ROM makes it seem to run a bit slowly at times. Children will most likely be more engrossed and not notice as much.

Price	£27.99
Publisher	Coktel Vision
Tel	0734 303322
Rating	★★★★★

Circus

The Circus comes to CD-ROM. **Geoff Spick** takes a look at a piece of edutainment from Matra Hachette Multimedia that's more "tainment" than "edu".

CIRCUS comes on CD-ROM and will run on a 486 SX-33 with 8Mb of RAM and a double speed CD Drive, it runs under Windows 3.1 in 640x480 with 256 colours. *Circus* provides great entertainment and does offer some educational aspects, although applied ballistics in the form of human cannonballs and flying lions may be stretching the term a little.

When you load *Circus* your children will be welcomed to the big top where there are eight acts inside waiting to perform for them and you. The purple magician after performing a couple of tricks will take a clown and encase his figure in a colour coded cylinder, dividing the hapless individuals body into four sections which you must reconstruct in the correct order, if sucessful a bigger clown turns up who gets divided up into more sections, effectively raising the difficulty level.

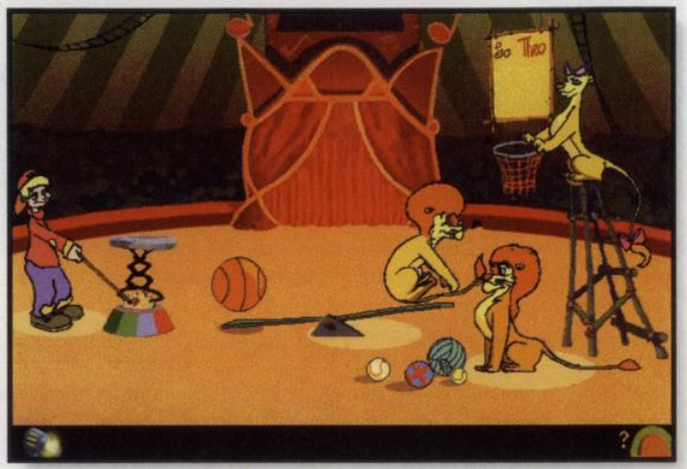
▼ **"Is it too late to mention I get vertigo and I'm allergic to feathers? The things we do for red nose day."**

▼ **The big top where all the action takes place, unless you're a ballistic clown with an avian fixation.**

The ballistic clown game lets the child mix explosives that go by the name of Kazoom and Shazam to find the right amount of power and boost to launch the smiling clown with the world war one flying helmet at the parrot trapese artiste which is swinging around on with the greatest of ease. The child then aims the cannon at the swinging parrot and if they've used the right balance of powder and are aiming in the right direction when the cannon fuse burns down to the cannon, then victory, a green parrot with a few less tail feathers will be theirs.

The next act runs along similar lines, using a variety of different weighing balls, the child must raise or lower a lion on an adjustable chair and launch him at the see saw on which the ball is balanced. The aim is to drop the lion onto the see saw, launching the ball into the air and through the basketball hoop, being held by a helpful lioness. There are two lions who take part in this game and the one who scores the most points wins.

Among the other games are a dressing the clowns and other animals, including the parrot and elephant, in preparation for the big parade, there should be a prize on offer for the design that clashes most. Each character has a different wardrobe of unflattering clothes, especially for the poor elephant, with each item available in several bright colours. There is also a clown musician who blows attractively rendered globes, that perform floating dances through the air, out of his saxophone to a pleasant tune. Other acts include the trapese artist who flies gracefully through the air,



▲ **Would someone like to explain why the baseball capped kid isn't a one course meal for three?**

the elephants and the clowns. Each offers a different feature for the kids to play with.

Children can also take a walk outside the big top to where the clowns live, They can explore and play in their strange residence, full of fun and wierd objects that they can interact with by pointing and clicking on the particular item with the mouse.

It's hard to criticise a game that has clowns running around in smouldering trousers and exploding hats. The drawn and rendered graphics, sound and presentation are first class, the games are easy and fun to play and should keep younger children occupied for quite a while. The homour of the characters really shows through and gives them an appealing quality. My only criticism of the product would be that the CD does seem to struggle with some of the graphics sequences, making them appear jerky even on a Pentium PC – maybe this is more the fault of Windows than anything else.

Price	£39.99
Supplier	Koch Multimedia, East Street, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7XX
Tel	01252 714340
Rating	★★★★

Football Encyclopedia 1930-1994

Gareth Richards goes in for the shot, but is brought down in the box – penalty!

THIS CD is purely and simply a catalogue of information of all the World Cups that have been played since 1930, and it contains a fantastic amount of facts and photos and team statistics. It is split into two main sections; History and The 1994 Finals, and has in addition to these a further section called Quiz. My only grumble with this whole CD is the scarcity of information about Scotland, although perhaps that's down to Scotland's performances rather than any omissions in the programming (as you can probably tell, Gareth is a Scot – Ed).

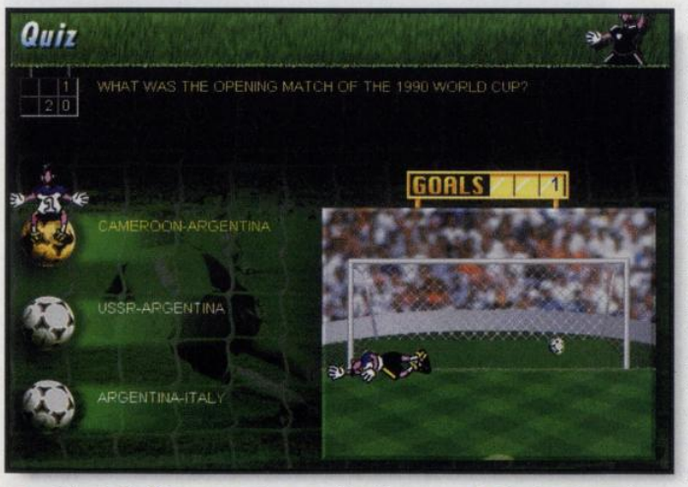
Let's begin with the History section to get us in the mood, reliving all those past glories (a very short process for us Scots). Clicking on the card marked History takes you to a menu screen where you are given the option of looking at the stars of the era covered, the history of the creation of FIFA, or the main attraction; any one of the past World Cups up to 1990. Once you have selected the year, you can view a short slide show about that competition, with accompanying soundtrack/commentary, plus you can look at the teams involved (including player performances) and search through the games that were played in the tournament.

The games icon lets you look at every single game played in the tournament, and supplies you with information on who played, who the ref was, who was subbed, booked, sent off or scored. In some cases, you can view a video window of the goals in question. I would have liked to have seen video replays of particularly vicious bookable offences (what?! - Ed). Still, can't have everything, I suppose. One 'nice' point about the History section is the different music that every World Cup tournament utilises. I suppose this adds a human angle to a product that could otherwise become bogged down by dry facts and number-crunching. But then, the whole system is designed with that in mind, from the music to the player profiles and slide and video shows to the inclusion of the Quiz for a bit of light relief.

Before going into that, however, there's the 1994 section to look at. In essence this is the same as the History set-up, giving you the choice of groups, Teams and Slide Show on the main screen. Again, these are the same, except that for all the teams in the last cup there are player photos and instead of the limited information given in History. There is a star players section, limited this time to the 1994 games.

Overall, for the serious football fanatic, this CD would be a welcome addition to their collection. With 20,000 items of statistics but offset with thousands of pictures ,and video footage, they have obviously put a lot of time into this CD, with good sound and music, excellent graphics, a powerful search tool and just about everything you could possibly want to know about World Cup football.?

It's a question of sport, Brian, but what happens next? On the ball are well Ian?



Going to the History menu lets you relive all your favourite World Cup moments over and over again

Look at that goalkeeper – he's eating goal pie! He's got goal pie all over his face

Price	£44.99
Supplier	Koch Multimedia East Street, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 7XX
Tel	01252 714340
Rating	★★★★

One Vision

Mike Diffley goes on a tour of the world with Virgin's One World and One Tribe.

IS there anything Richard Branson hasn't got a hand in? Soft drinks, airlines, radio, record labels, games, and now, top-level edutainment software. If I've missed anything, sorry Rich.

Virgin Communications is a new company with a new line in mainstream multimedia software. The first products to find themselves out in the UK are *One World*, a multimedia atlas and *One Tribe*, a multimedia view of the population of this planet.

The programs have been produced by American developers ESP. The same versions are being marketed across the world which means American spellings and a variety of English language anomalies – or does it? A closer look is called for.

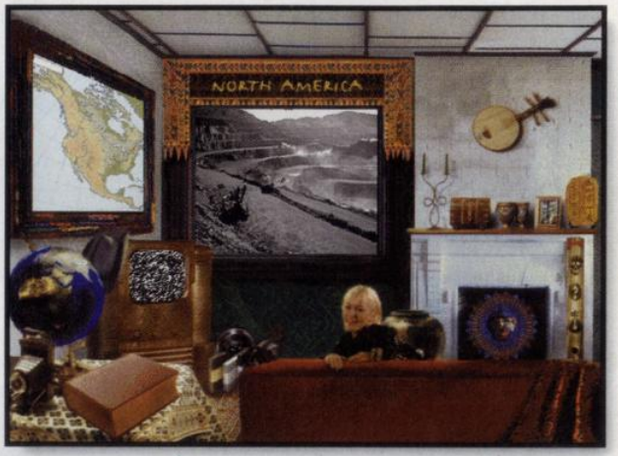
One World

HISTORY and geography are immutably interlinked. If you find this difficult to believe then take a look at an old map of the world. Look at one over five years old and the map of Europe bears no resemblance to the maps of today. Look at a 50 year-old map and the world is barely recognisable.

World atlases are an unusual species whether they appear as software or in book form. The problem has always been that the moment an atlas appears, it's out of date. The up-side of the temporary nature of atlases is that they rapidly become important historical documents. Virgin's *One World Atlas* is as up-to-date as it is possible for one to be, with text entries up to and including December 1994.

In keeping with most recent multimedia software, *One World* is Windows-based.

Setting up is straightforward and involves a minimum of disruption (some multimedia packages almost take over the Windows environment completely). The installation creates a group file and an icon for launching the program. When firing up the program, I did experience an intermittent memory error that crashed the program before it got started, but as this happened only occasionally, the reason for it was not identified.



▲ **The cute and bubbly Pip Dann introduces One Tribe. The room acts as a menu system**

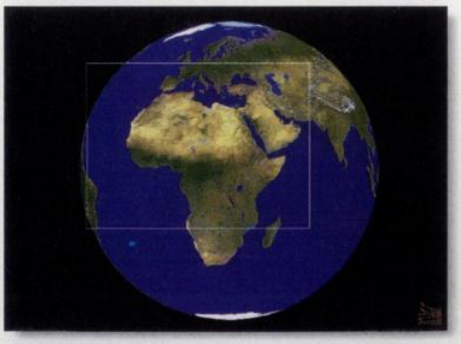
Once the program is running cleanly, the first thing that you will notice is the music. This plays throughout and if you don't want it then you will have to use the soundcard's volume control to turn it down, or off. That said, the music is an interesting selection of ethnic music including African, Chinese and, remarkably, contemporary blues.

The point-and-click menu system is a delight to use (most of the time). The main menu or Finder is a graphical representation of an alphabetically-indexed notepad. Choose the country or continent you want from the list and you're on your way. The next stop is a map of the chosen country showing main cities and airports. Clicking the left mouse button acts as a zoom and the right button zooms out.

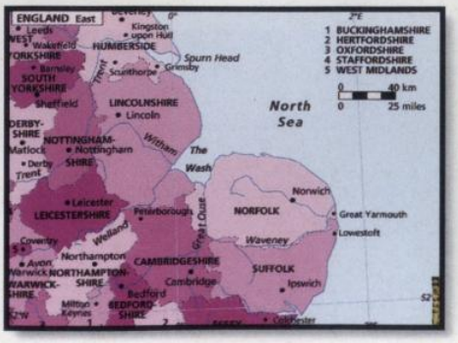
In the bottom right corner of the screen is the icon for a control panel that gives you access to the photo-library, the database, on-line help and the Finder. The quality of the photographic images is superb, though I am not convinced that the selection is as good as it could be. If the photographs from the UK are representative of the package as a whole, then *One World* has problems.

Of the 18 images, eight are postcard

▼ **The satellite pictures go to prove that a cartographer's lot is not a happy one**



▼ **This is as close up as any of the maps go. It's funny though, I thought Derby was bigger than Matlock**



▼ **Is this really the best image they could come up with for the UK?**

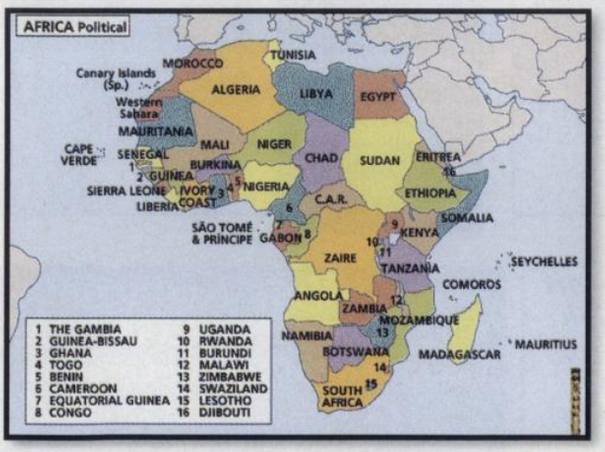
images of London, four more are from the south of England, two from Scotland, one from Wales and the rest from Northern Ireland. Of the latter, two out of three of the images are of the graffiti associated with the Troubles. Even taking into consideration the fact that *One World* originated in the US, the selection of images is not representative of the UK. This creates the impression that the selections of images for other countries are equally misleading.

▲ **Welcome to the music library, pick a country and sample its songs**

When using the photo-libraries, it becomes necessary to master the keyboard shortcut controls or else it will drive you mad. When a picture is displayed, it has no caption. To display the caption using the mouse, you have to click on the menu icon first and then on the picture info icon from the menu. Alternatively, you can press the 'I' key.

The database is equally frustrating. While some sections are extremely impressive, others barely skim the surface. The opening summary covers basic information such as total population, political status and religion(s). In a multi-cultural society such as Britain, to give the impression that there are only Protestants and Roman Catholics is hardly fair or accurate. Nor is there any mention of the links between church and state that exist in the UK. Again, this type of sweeping generalisation taints the whole package.

This is a real shame because, once past the summary, the database gets into a lot of the nitty-gritty about political and recent history. The level of detail and accuracy is surprisingly good and, at last, inspires some confidence in the quality of information.



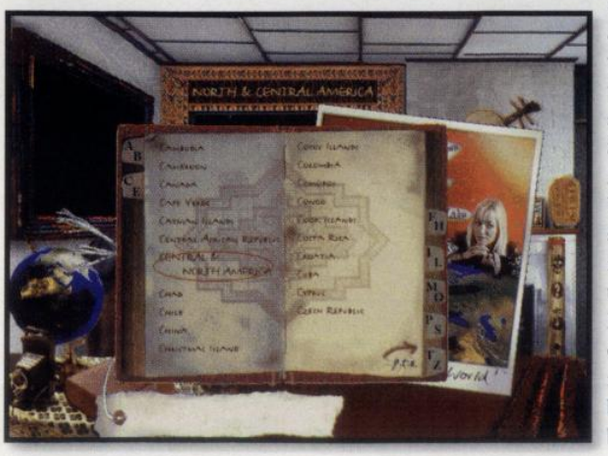
▲ **Zoom out from the maps to view continents and the structure of borders**

There are some anomalies in the spelling of certain words, bur this was not as big a problem as I expected it to be, in fact it's barely noticeable. This is partly due to the fact that the text is so difficult to read. The database information is displayed in a transparent window which places the text over the top of the map. As the maps are light in colour and already have text on them, reading the database becomes quite a challenge.

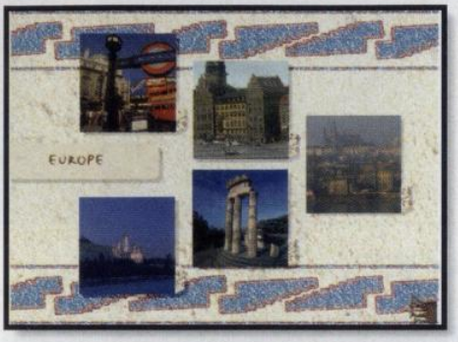
One Tribe

VIRGIN'S *One Tribe* is a variant of the *One World Atlas* and shares a lot of its good and bad points. It also features some clever enhancements like presenter, Pip Dann, who appears in video form. This TV-style format will appeal to younger users, especially those who like the infectious enthusiasm of presenters like Michaela Strachan.

▼ **The satellite mode allows you to zoom in and get a better view of the continents**



As in *One World*, your tour can be as organised or as random as you choose. The focus is much more on the people than the geography, and the photo libraries reflect this. More interesting is the music. A lot of this is the same as with *One World*, but it contains an extra database with information about the musicians, instruments and the history of the musical style.



▲ **This picture was taken from One Tribe, but it could just as easily be One World**

Other than this, it was a massive attack of deja-vu. The same problems exist with the content and presentation of the database. The maps and the map display engine, the background music, the satellite images are exactly the same as *One World*.

Of the two programs, I prefer *One Tribe*. It has a more personal feel than *One World* and gives the impression of being a much tighter presentation. Pip Dann might be unknown (right now) but she does come across very well.

For youngsters and schools, either of these products would prove to be an ideal purchase. Looking into the future, if Virgin can take on board the criticisms levelled at these products and get ESP to look at putting them right, these products would progress from being good to being brilliant.

Price	One World £44.99 One Tribe £59.99
Supplier	Virgin Sound and Vision
Tel	0181 964 8242
Rating	★★★

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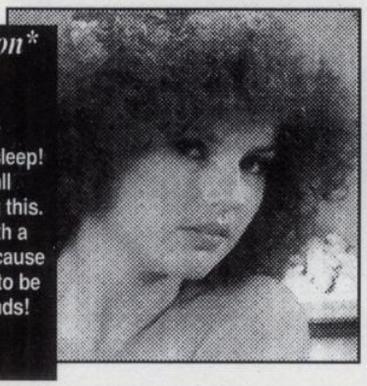

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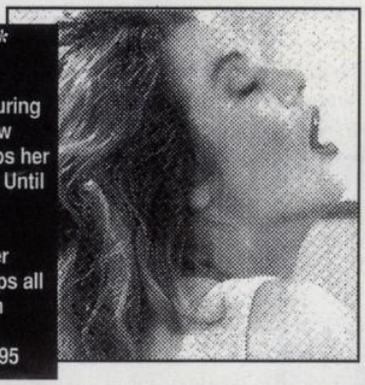

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A Better Guide To Sex

Is this all that it claims, or just another example of sex being used to sell a second rate product? **Neil King** takes time from his Honeymoon to find out.

ONCE you've worked your way through the short credit sequence, you are presented with a number of click screens, an arrow to take you onto the next menu and an exit button. Clicking on one of the screens kicks an AVI video clip into life and that's as interactive as this package gets.

The introduction, by John Linkiewicz of the London Institute Of Human Sexuality, gives the impression that this is a learning experience. That it's something to be enjoyed by couples. Even something that can sustain excitement in a relationship. It falls far short of that.

The reality is that most of this is loosely based on "The Karma Sutra". I say loosely based because it skips over all the devotional material. It ignores the spiritual side almost completely and pays little attention to the emotional side of love & making love. Apart from putting names to a number of sexual positions and showing brief clips of those positions, even the physical side gets glossed over.

One of the few points this video does succeed in making is that making love and experimenting in sexual techniques should be by mutual consent. It also reinforces the point that S.T.D.s do exist and it's a good idea to use a barrier method of contraception, particularly if the sex is of a casual nature. That said it doesn't make any judgements about relationships and partners.

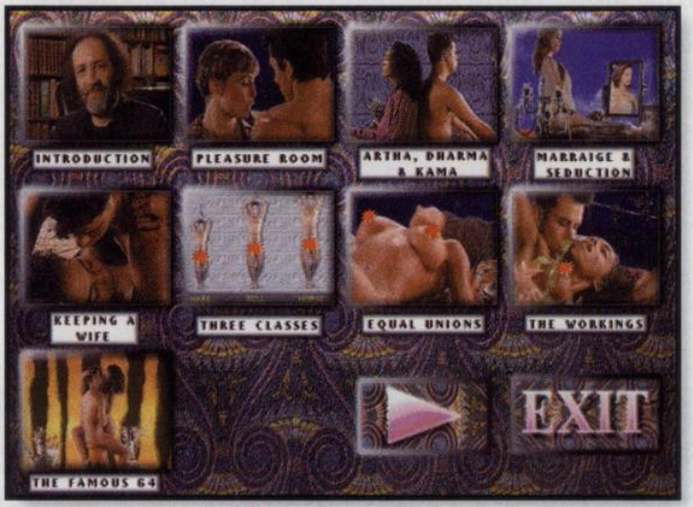
The video clips themselves are not of a particularly high standard. The clips that feature John Linkiewicz's comments are particularly poor. Not only do they give the impression that they're badly dubbed, Linkiewicz himself doesn't generate enough enthusiasm in his voice to make you want to listen.

Most of the love scenes have been shot in soft light and/or focus. On a big screen this may work reasonably well. On a relatively small portion of a computer screen it causes a lot of blurring.

The commentary that accompanies the love scenes is abysmal. Not only is it very monotone, it's also stilted. In addition to which there are times when a sentence is chopped before conclusion to be finished at the start of the next clip. I couldn't find a credit for the person that voiced the sex scenes. If I was the woman in question, I'd have left my name of as well.

That this is produced by Pixel Blue under license from Simitar Entertainment partly explains the lack of useful or educational values. It seems as if a lot of this was originally designed for entertainment rather than education. You get the impression that most of the AVI clips have been taken from a single, second rate video and cut with clips of John Linkiewicz's comments.

There are a lot of books and even CD-ROMs that do this better. The Karma Sutra it's self contains lots more information than this does. It also explores almost every aspect of sexuality better and with more depth. In short there is little that recommends *A Better Guide To Sex.*



▲ All the ins and out of the program can be seen from this main option screen

▲ Are you going to take this from this man? He's telling you were to stick it

Price	£29.99 (MPEG version to follow at same price)
Publisher	Pixel Blue
Tel	01207 270437
Why?	Because you're sad
Why not?	Dr. Alex Comfort does it better
Rating	★

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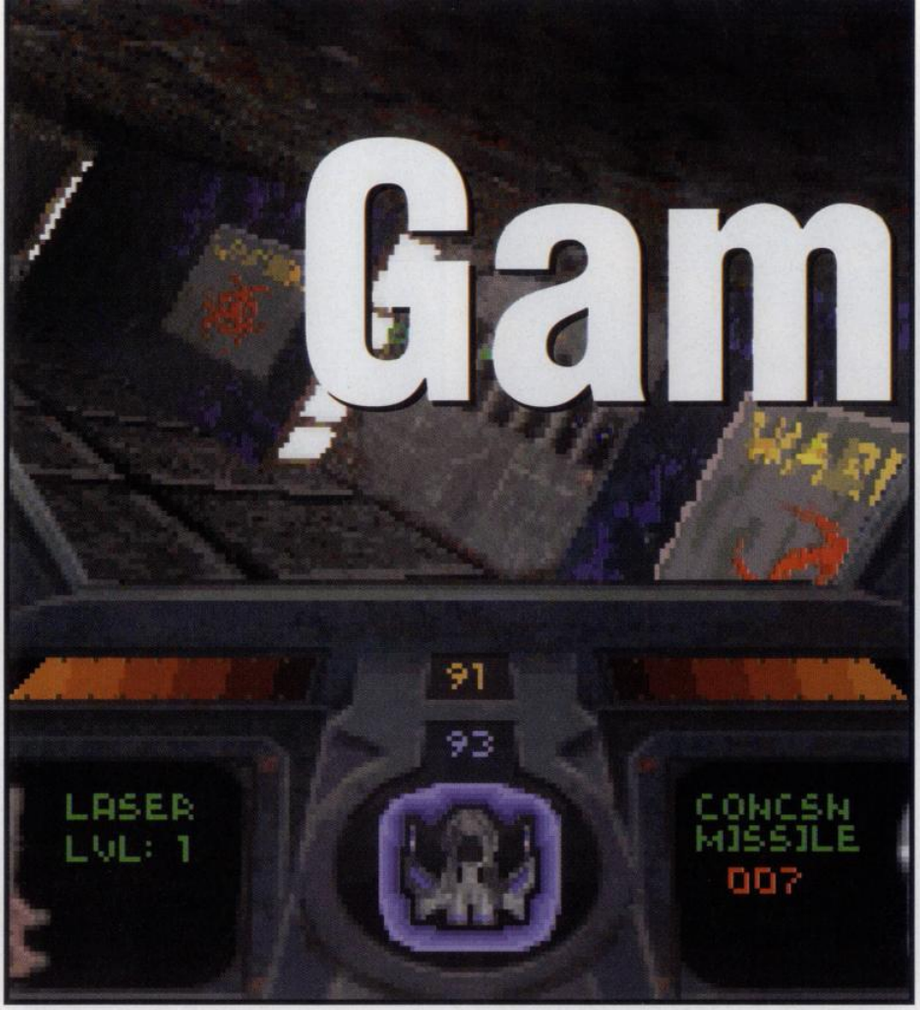


Games

A wide variety of games this month – from 3D action adventures and point-and-click adventures, to WWI combat simulators.

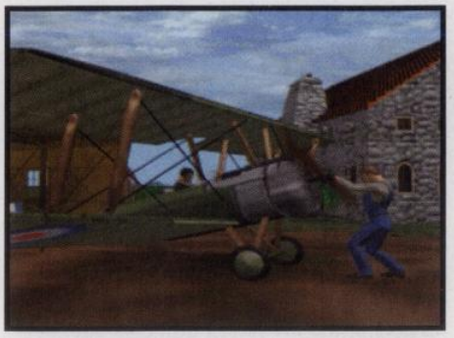
Descent
Interplay
Imagine a *Doom*-style 3D environment in which you can move in complete freedom – left, right, and up and down! *Descent* is such a game. Turn to page 62 for a full review.

Iron Assault
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Strap yourself into the biggest, baddest mech robot and take on an entire fleet of alien invaders in this metal stomping shoot'em-up. Roll up for the robot carnival – page 65.

Alone in the Dark III
Infogrames
Carnby goes way out west in the third instalment of this classic adventure series. Gun totin' zombies, spur-wearing cowboys and eerie goings-on – the flesh is crawling on page 66.

KA-50 Hokum
Virgin Interactive Entertainment
A long time in the making, this helicopter combat simulator turns out to be well worth it – Simis entwine detail with total playability. Don't get your rotors in a twist on page 68.

Guilty
Psygnosis
Subtitled Innocent *Until Caught II*, *Guilty* is a point-and-click adventure with a typically English sense of humour. Are we laughing with it or at it? Find out on page 71.



Wings of Glory
Electronic Arts
Can Origin squeeze any more games out of their home-grown 3D flight engine? From *Strike Commander* to *Wings of Glory* - full review on page 72.

Woodruff & the Schnibble of Azimuth
Sierra On-Line
Remember that obscure puzzler called *Goblins*? *Woodruff* is by the same people and is just a strange. French humour alert on page 74. Haw, he, haw.

▲ Hey boss – which way is up? Actually, although initially is is quite difficult to keep your bearings you soon come to realise that it doesn't really matter

◀ This quilted, glowing wall restores your energy if you fly between it – a bit like a pit-stop really. Early on, you won't need to use it so fiten because the enemies are pretty tame. Take not of where it is later in the game because you're going to need it!

▼ Escape from the darkened wells as the whole building goes up in flames!

Descent

There's descent in the ranks as **Steve Hill** tackles Doom in a spaceship. Get back to work Steve.

THE Post Terran Minerals Corporation mining station has fallen into the hands of a horde of rebellious robots and it is down to you to infiltrate and destroy it. Failure to do so will lead to the eventual destruction of Earth, mankind and life as we know it.

No worries mate, you are a cold-blooded killer with the latest in hardware to help you – not to mention the incentive of triple-pay on Sundays! This is the gist of the (far from brief) briefing at the beginning of the game, which is given by some slap-head in a suit before you are finally unleashed on your mission.

All you really need to know is that you're in charge of a mother of a ship (an Israeli-made Pyro-Gk if you're interested) and stuck down a mine shaft with orders to shoot on sight and, if you're feeling humane, rescue a few hostages.

This isn't any old mine though, being inhabited by a variety of unpleasant robots, all equipped with more than adequate means of blowing you away. Fortunately you're not exactly shy of firepower yourself and you've got both primary and secondary weapnos to go fragging with.

Initially these are Lasers and Concussion Missiles, but as you cruise around the mine shafts you can get tooled up with such delights as Vulcan Cannons, Homing Missiles, Spreadfire Cannons, Proximity Bombs, Plasma Cannons, Smart Missiles, Fusion Cannons and even a Mega Missile – whatever that might be.

In the time honoured video game tradition there are also plenty of power-ups to collect in the myriad of tunnels – an energy boost for example will recharge your weapons system and a shield boost will maintain your all-important shield level. Other items to be found in the game include a cloaking device a la *Star Trek*, and an invulnerability power-up.

The most crucial items to collect are the colour-coded access keys. These give you entry to the part of the complex that contains the all-important fusion reactor, the shooting of which will result in a Death Star-style destruction of the entire mine.

Unfortunately, once you have taken out the reactor you have just 50 seconds to get your homeboy ass out of the place. Consequently, it is advisable to know the whereabouts of the emergency exit and to clear yourself a route beforehand. There is also an automap function, but it only shows you where you have already been rather than where you need to go. Should you succeed in destroying the mine and escaping in time, you will be bucked into space and immediately transported to another, more difficult, mine. It isn't easy being a mercenary.

For in-the-cockpit, in-yer-face 3-D action, *Descent* is a winner. It comes with

▲ Charge up your shields with one of these blue things – swallow one and you'll dance all night

▲ The 3D graphics are absolutely stunning throughout the entire game. Doom in a spaceship anyone?

▲ Taking control of the ship is tricky at first. I prefer to use the keys myself

◀ Zooming down a twisting corridor is extremely exhilarating. Watch out for those walls!

a full range of control options, including the mouse, although piloting Beelzebub's steel vulture of death with a small plastic rodent doesn't feel quite right. This is more of a sweaty joystick, lurching around in your seat, type of game. It is far more than a straightforward shoot-'em-up though. The labyrinthine complexities of the mines test your memory as much as your trigger finger, and discovering the many hidden rooms and passages is an important part of the game.

Superb 3-D graphics evoke a dank, claustrophobic atmosphere reminiscent of *Alien 3*, albeit without Brian Glover, or an alien, or that bald woman. A degree of cunning and stealth is required, as you find yourself peering around corners before launching a full-scale assault.

There is full surround sound in this game, so you can often hear your foes before they loom into view and this makes it all the more scary. With a decent stereo set-up you can actually determine their angle of approach to buy yourself a few crucial seconds reaction time. A 'reverse stereo' option is included in case your speakers are wrongly aligned. These guys think of everything.

The five available difficulty levels ensure that *Descent* will provide lasting value. Trainee level is equivalent to a Sunday drive in the country, with the occasional appearance of a robot providing some light relief. Conversely, the top level, Insane, usually results in you being blown to fragments as soon as you're out of the starting gate. There is also a full range of multi-player options for those cosy get-togethers, as well as the option to save between stages to prevent you going over old ground.

Descent is a Die Hard of a game that takes the *Doom* engine to new heights. It's super smooth and exhilarating to play. Definitely worth a look.

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Price	£39.99
Publisher	Interplay
Tel	0235 821666
Requirements	486, 4Mb RAM, VGA, Hard Drive. Supports all major soundcards, Joystick, mouse
Why?	Smooth 3-D graphics. Excellent stereo sound. Wide range of levels
Why not?	Frustrating if you get lost. Slightly repetitive
Rating	93%

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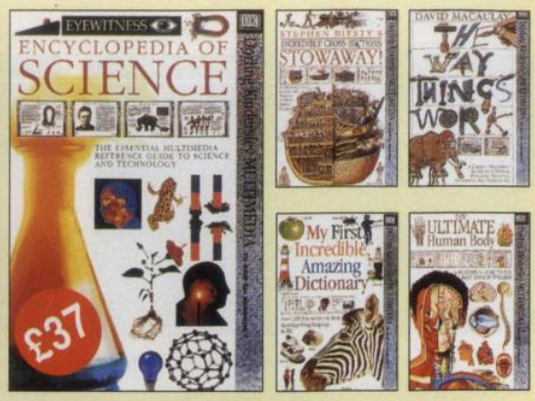

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Iron Assault

Fancy being in control of a 90-feet tall robot? If so, you'd better sign up with **Dino Boni** for a tour of duty in Iron Assault

THE world has been enslaved by a group of massive corporations who serve as mini-governments. Units are the name given to massive walking robots, armed to the proverbial teeth with state-of-the-art weaponry. No-one on Earth had the necessary firepower to stand up to these hulking giants, and the corporations enjoyed nearly eighty years of fascist rule. This all ended when pockets of resistance rose up from the ashes of civilisation after the mass slaughter of striking workers by one of the corporations. Portions of Earth's population realised they had been living under the shadow of fear, and decided to fight back.

A few years on, the rebellion is going well. They are now well armed, and have been developing their own units for use in battle. The commanders have been lying in wait for the right time to attack, and that time has come. The only bad part of this story is, like always, you are the mug who has been chosen to run countless suicide missions and bring about world peace. Fail, and the human race will be enslaved forever.

The missions themselves vary only in small amounts of detail. Each one has a primary objective (normally you have to destroy a pre-determined number of enemy units), but sometime you are required to infiltrate enemy bases, taking you into a bizarre version of Doom but played with 90-foot high robots.

Each unit has its own strengths and weaknesses, and as you progress through the missions, you are given higher specification machines to go blasting in. Each unit is armed with just about as much weaponry as it can carry, and for a lot of the missions, you use every last scrap to dispatch the enemy.

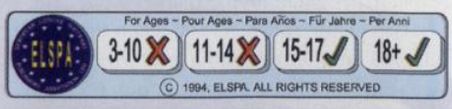
The outside world is depicted in a mixture of textured landscapes and giant sprites for the enemy units. Some of the later missions look very nice. The graphical presentation throughout the game is up to more or less the same standard, but it's the gameplay (or lack of it) that lets down *Iron Assault*.

This game is fun for a little while but soon loses it's appeal. Lasting appeal is something that *Iron Assault* is not big on; the game relies on its novelty robot factor to keep it going. Sadly, fancy graphics are not the only thing that sells games; personally, I like to enjoy playing the games I buy and *Iron Assault* is in that small grey area of indecision. Another one of those "could have been but never was" kind of games.

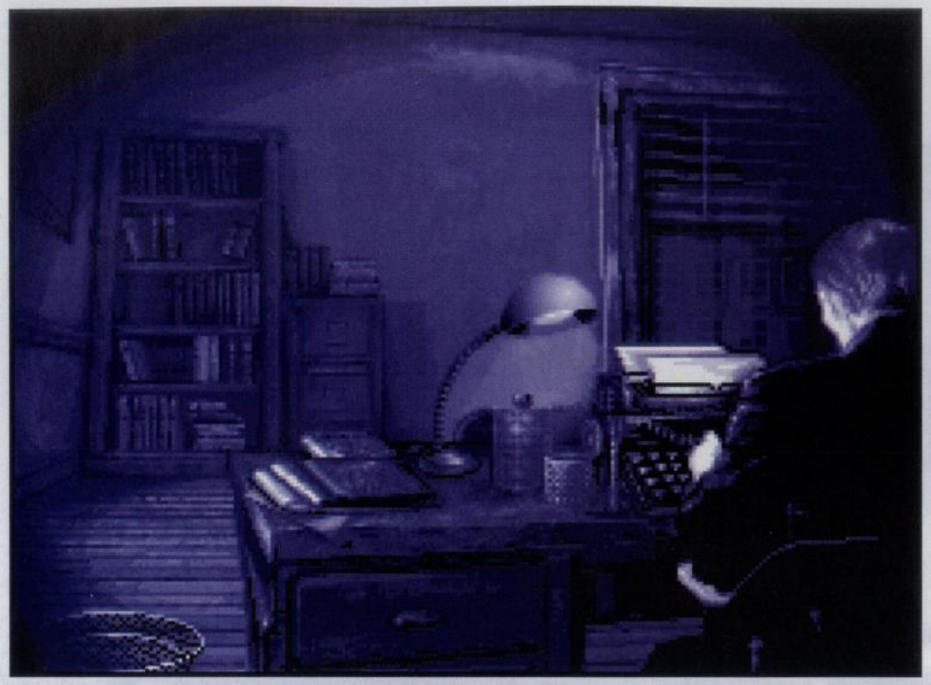
▲ After turning on the stealth and night sight systems, targets become easy to spot as giant moving bits of green against a green background!

▲ The map screen allows you to set way point for the more complicated missions, and to order different units to specific locations.

▲ Close combat in robots armed with high-powered missiles and guns is not a good idea, especially when they can move faster than you.



Price	£34.99
Publisher	Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Tel	0181 960 2255
Requirements	486SX, 4Mb RAM VGA, CD-ROM drive, hard drive Supports all major sound cards, Joystick
Why?	Some pleasant graphical touches and smart sound FX
Why not?	Samey action, cheesy (and badly animated intro scene), not exactly gripping
Rating	70%



▲ "Git off yer horse and drink yer milk". Zombies are one thing, but cowboy zombies are another...

◀ The usual Alone In the Dark-style intro sequences proliferate the game

Alone in the Dark 3

Carnby never seems to get any rest, and neither does **Dino Boni**. He joins Carnby on the third of his Alone in the Dark adventures.

I'M NOT a massive fan of the *Alone in the Dark* games, but there is something to be said about their unique gameplay that still holds a cutting edge above many game on the market today. The first two games did very well when they were released onto unsuspecting PC owners a few years ago, and have since undergone a CD-ROM transformation. *Alone in the Dark 3* is (at the moment) solely CD-ROM based, and sports a number of audio CD tracks, some great sampled speech and a massive game to boot.

In case you haven't played the previous two games, you play the part of Carnby, a Victorian era private detective specialising in the paranormal, supernatural and juts plain weird. The games are presented as arcade adventures and use superior polygon technology combined with a collection of beautiful hand-drawn backgrounds to set the scene in. These features, combined with their long-lasting appeal, have made the *Alone* series a real hit over the years.

In *Alone 3*, Carnby is called in to investigate the disappearance of Emily Hartwood (who 'starred' in the second *Alone* game), a budding Hollywood young hopeful who is given a job as a script girl on a new film, originally entitled "The Last Ranger". She is sent with the rest of the film team for a shoot in the ghost town of Slaughter Gulch, but on the night of July 3rd 1925, five miles outside Slaughter Gulch, one of the horses rented by the film company turns up, crazed by fear and exhaustion. Upon its saddle a woman has hurriedly scrawled two words; "Call Carnby". You are given the job of discovering what has happened to Emily and the rest of the crew in Slaughter Gulch, a town with a terrible, horrifying secret. Carnby doesn't mind though, it's all in a days work for him.

Although the main game engine remains for the most part unchanged, there have been a number of enhancements to the game since the second instalment was released last year. A sequence of 3D 'transitions' has been added, allowing the game to flow more freely. Vital parts of the story are now presented to the player rather than making them chance upon them by accident. The graphics engine has also been improved and at some points the game can reach stunning speeds of up to 94 frames per second.

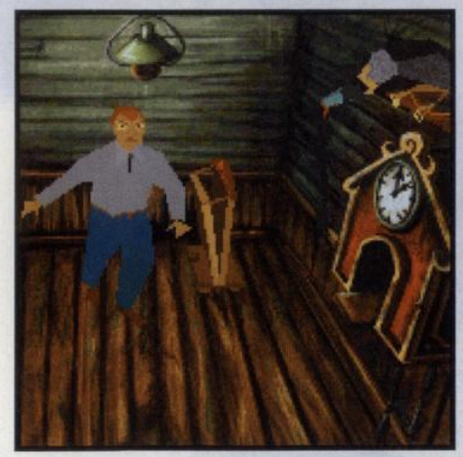
The game, as it has been previously said, is basically an arcade adventure. Carnby has to collect objects and use them to solve puzzles in order to move onto the next stage of the game. Some of the puzzles are slightly obscure (The very first one definitely falls into this category), but the further you get into the game, the easier they seem to become. After a while, it becomes apparent that the crew and Emily have been kidnapped but Carnby must rely on more than raw firepower to dispose

▲ Alone in the Dark III has a lot of sampled speech – because of this the cut-scenes are more palatable

◀ A series of 3D transitions allow the story to flow more freely than in the pervious two AITD games

▶ There are more views in AITD III. The 'twisted' camera angles are cool and are very atmospheric

▼ Carnby, once again, is animated rather well using the latest polygon technology



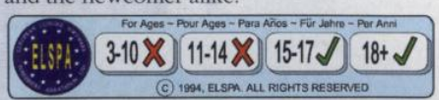
of their captors. Throughout the game, Carnby can read posters, notebooks and pieces of newspaper to build up your knowledge of the history of Slaughter Gulch, and maybe figure out a way to stop them.

Alone 3 has a fair amount of sampled speech in its coiffeurs, as well as a complete audio CD soundtrack that plays during the course of the game and really sets the atmosphere to breaking point. The speech is only used when Carnby finds something (or someone) really important to the plot, which I think is a shame. It wouldn't have taken that much more effort to make the speech available for the whole game, instead of limiting it to the important sections.

The objects in *Alone 3* have also undergone a complete re-working. The weapons available in the game are more varied than before, and even include the likes of a whip and a primitive chaingun. Most objects in *Alone 3* are used at some point for completing the stages of a puzzle, but it's sometimes difficult to find out which object you're carrying does what. The influence for this game (and indeed the entire series) has been taken from the Lovecraft mythology (also known as Cuthulu) but the programmers have shied away form mere demonic powers and included some Indian magic and mythology, giving the game a much needed face lift.

The rest of the game is very much the same as it predecessors, but this is by no means a bad thing. Infogrames have finally succeeded in introducing a variable skill level into *Alone 3*, removing a lot of the frustration that went with the previous two games and throwing it out of the window. You can now alter Carnby's and his enemy's starting hit points in order to make combat slightly easier, or you can choose one of the predefined settings. Multiple saves are also supported in *Alone 3*, and this time they're unlimited.

Overall, *Alone in the Dark 3* is probably the best *Alone* game of the series. If don't expect too much in the way of new graphics and gameplay and you'll be pleasantly surprised by its addicitiveness and atmosphere. *Alone 3* is a game for the hardened *Alone* fan and the newcomer alike.



Price	£44.99
Publisher	Infogrames
Tel	0171 738 8199
Requirements	386DX 33, 4Mb RAM, VGA, hard disk, CD-ROM drive. Supports all major soundcards
Why?	Addictive gameplay, superb graphics
Why not?	Obscure puzzles, can get very frustrating
Rating	80%

Ka-50 Hokum

Keith Pullin flies off to the pirate-infested South China Sea in the most advanced helicopter in the world.

IF helicopters are your thing, then you'll know the *Ka-50 Hokum* is the only helicopter in the world capable of performing a loop. Achieved with an extremely powerful engine giving a top speed of 350kph and a coaxial rotor system (a second set of blades directly above the first), this baby doesn't even need a tail rotor. Unfortunately, it's Russian, and while the Ruskies laugh all the way to the bank, the rest of the world have to figure out how the hell they did it.

Ka-50 Hokum from Virgin is a highly detailed flight sim/arcade game which takes place in the South China Sea as you attempt to beat smugglers and pirates in your capacity as freelance mercenary.

The pirates are equipped with AH-64a Apaches (where did they get those from, I wonder?), tanks, SAMs and anything else they can lay their hands on. The pirated goods are then sold to local villagers, some of which use their innocent-looking straw houses as cover for enormous weapon stashes.

Believe it or not all this is true and actually happening right now in that part of the world, so Simis (the company responsible for *AV-8B Harrier Assault*), decided to cash in on the *Hokum* hype and bring the merchant shipper's plight into the open.

As commander of one of the mercenary protection forces, you have eight helicopters at your disposal to utterly destroy the pirates' main HQ. Basically you have four different choppers: Ka-50 Hokum, Bell AH-1W Super Cobra, Mil HI-8 Hip and the Westland Army Lynx.

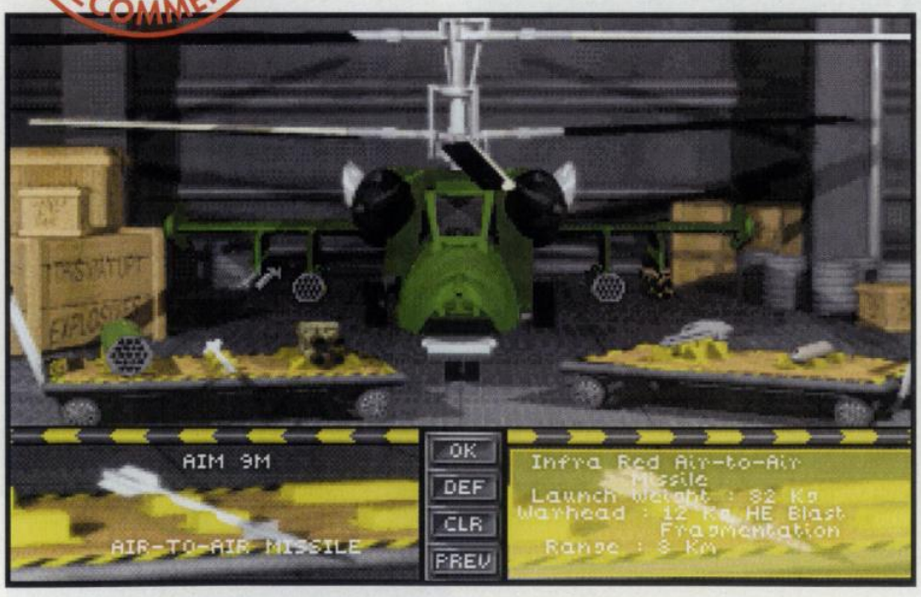
As you step aboard the command frigate in preparation for the first mission, the best thing to do is check out the satellite map of the area. This can be zoomed in and different helicopters in your flight selected and piloted. The map is where you begin all of your missions and you must click on the 'start mission' icon to fill the briefing room with information. You can also survey the area and plan effective strategies.

Wait a few seconds and a message at the bottom of the screen will flash up informing you that a mission for one of the four choppers is available. There are three kinds of mission: Escort Ships, Interception of AH-64a Apaches and AH-6G Defenders or ground forces (including enemy villages, tanks, AA guns, SAM sites and speed boats), and Reconnaissance. You can now lift off and begin the rout. Well, that's what I thought!

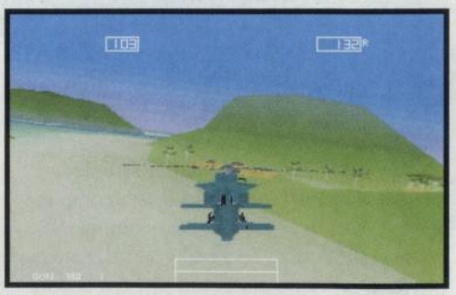
Suddenly, another message appears on the telex telling you the mission has been taken, and, lo and behold, as you flick back to the bridge view, a Bell Super Cobra thunders past the window in glorious detail!

Somewhat surprised at the computer's eagerness to fly the mission for you, another mission appears and exactly the same happens. So what's going on? Well the incredible thing about this clever little sim is that it will actually endeavour to complete the whole

RECOMMENDED CD-ROM User RECOMMENDED



▲ The AIM 9M is a missile with devastating capabilities – just remember that the bad guys have also got them



▲ Outside views give a good impression of the outside world. Without dials though, flying can be tricky

▶ The course of your carrier can be plotted from the main map screen

game itself. If left to its own devices, immediate assessment of the pirates' progress will cause an automated launch of helicopters – well, one every three minutes anyway.

One of the ways this can be used to your advantage is by letting the computer choose which 'copter to send where and then switch to manual control when you're near the target; saving a great deal of boring navigation.

The advanced pilot will rarely use this computer assistance, but any normal person will pump for a mix of the two. You can also select your own targets and then add and even change the waypoints at any time to reconfigure the mission to your own aims.

All this would be exemplary in any combat sim, but *Hokum* excels by allowing you to formation-fly four choppers into the target zone and strategically send them all over the islands to complete the mission in half the time. Imagine, you are attacking the main town from the north, whilst your wingman neutralises the radar so that they can't detect you, and at the same time your other flight is cutting off their escape and mopping up any stray guns. Brilliant. This adds a whole new dimension to combat flying.

One of the fascinating aspects of *Hokum* is that all the helicopters react realistically, and it's entirely possible to slide sideways over a target; strafing the ground and blowing up huts with comical A-Team rockets.

The graphics are extremely detailed for this type of game; mixing the harsh contours of games like *Navy Fighters* with the more pixellated feel of *Thunderblade*. The result is a realistic, slightly hazy, texture-mapped environment that resembles some of the official Evens & Sutherland US military simulators.

With texture mapping on nearly everything, and tree-covered landscapes all around, along with a never-ending selection of viewpoints, it's amazing just how fast the game moves. Even on a low-end 486, *Hokum* is entirely playable with quite a decent amount of detail.

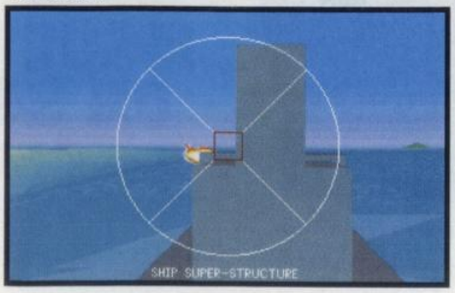
Ka-50 Hokum is an incredibly playable and accurate helicopter simulation that successfully marries high-end technical aspects with good old gung-ho warmongering. This is definitely one of the most accessible pick-up-and-play flight simulations on the PC today and I for one recommend it wholeheartedly.

Price	£39.99
Publisher	Virgin Interactive Entertainment
Tel	0181 960 2255
Requirements	386, 4Mb RAM, 256 colour VGA/MCGA, hard drive. Supports all major soundcards, Joystick, Mouse
Why?	Splendid graphics. Intelligent computer assistance. Loads to see and do
Why not?	Not enough missions. A wider variety of enemies would be nice
Rating	91%

▲ Flying low is one way of avoiding primitive pirate radar. Watch out for low-flying bullets!

▼ The sound of the rotor turbines kicking into action is pretty astounding

▲ Circling this village to see if there are any hostiles to blow away...



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▲ After a failed attempt to hijack the milk truck, Ladd is caught by Ysanne and forced to surrender in the presence of obscene amounts of weaponry

▲ On the casino planet,. you stupidly loose Ysanne's ship in a fit of gambling. How can you get it back when you haven't got a credit on you to call your own?

Guilty

Dino Boni looks at Psygnosis' sequel to Innocent Until Caught.

JACK T. Ladd is a nice man, but he would rather die than let anyone know it. His exploits with the Tax Office in *Innocent Until Caught* received a very mixed reaction from the media and the end-users in general. His next escapade, *Guilty*, sees him up to his old tricks. Ladd is a criminal, but a kind of loveable one at that. The game opens with a very comical scene involving a stick-up of a milk delivery truck, with Ladd using a hostage to persuade the men to hand over the cash. The hostage in this case is not a man as you might expect, but a cow. "Give me the cash or the Freausian gets it between the horns!" shouts Ladd. It may not be very original, but it is very funny. Ladd's plans lay in ruins when he is picked up by Ysanne, a female cop with a massive attitude problem. She arrests Ladd and brings him aboard, which is where the game starts proper.

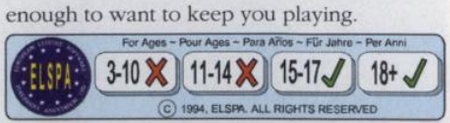
You can play either Ysanne or Ladd in this point-and-click adventure from Psygnosis. The CD-ROM version features full speech for all of the characters, plus a smattering of animated 3D intros and cut sequences.

Your first job as Ladd is to break out of the cell that Ysanne has locked you in. A bit of experimentation will get you free, but you gain the impression that this is a very picky game as far as control and objects are concerned. Often, an object Ladd has to use is a single point on the background, and most of the time you only come across it by pure accident. The frustration factor rises as you find yourself cornered in more and more dead ends, but somewhere in *Guilty*, a good game is hiding. Maybe.

Guilty's plot leads you away form your present predicament to the threat of an Alien Invasion that is devastating the colony planets of the galaxy. As per usual, the defence fleet is unable to contain the brute force of these aliens, and so it is left up to you (and Ysanne) to sort it out on your own. Each section of the game takes place on a different planet and finishes when you have completed all the necessary puzzles thrown at you by the game.

Guilty may not be the best game as far as graphics and playability goes, but the sound (or more to the point, the speech) is very good indeed. The music in the game is pretty awful as well.

Psygnosis have not really learned from the criticism that was levelled at Innocent Until Caught. The graphics still lack any kind of character or life, and the plot is slightly laughable to say the least. Guilty does have its comical moments, but they're sadly not enough to want to keep you playing.



Price	£39.99
Publisher	Psygnosis
Tel	0151 709 5755
Requirements	386DX, 4Mb RAM, VGA, hard drive, mouse, CD-ROM Drive.
Why?	Brilliant speech, comical in places
Why not?	Picky interface, no lasting appeal
Rating	59%

Wings of Glory

Geoff Spick takes to the skies in Origin's heroic First World War flight sim.

FLASH – "Yes, prat at the back!"
Darling – "I'm sure we'd all like to know why you're called the twenty minuters?"
Flash – "Why it's simple, the average life expectancy of a new pilot is twenty minutes."

Those lines from the Private Plane episode of Blackadder Goes Forth just about sum up what life was going to be like for the new pilots of the Royal Flying Corps during World War One. None of your Women's Auxiliary Balloon Corps types were welcome here.

Following in the tradition of games like *Blue Max, Red Baron, Knights of the Sky, Dawn Patrol* and, to a lesser extent, *Dogfight* and *Evasive Action*, *Wings of Glory* attempts to recreate the close quarters combat of true dogfighting.

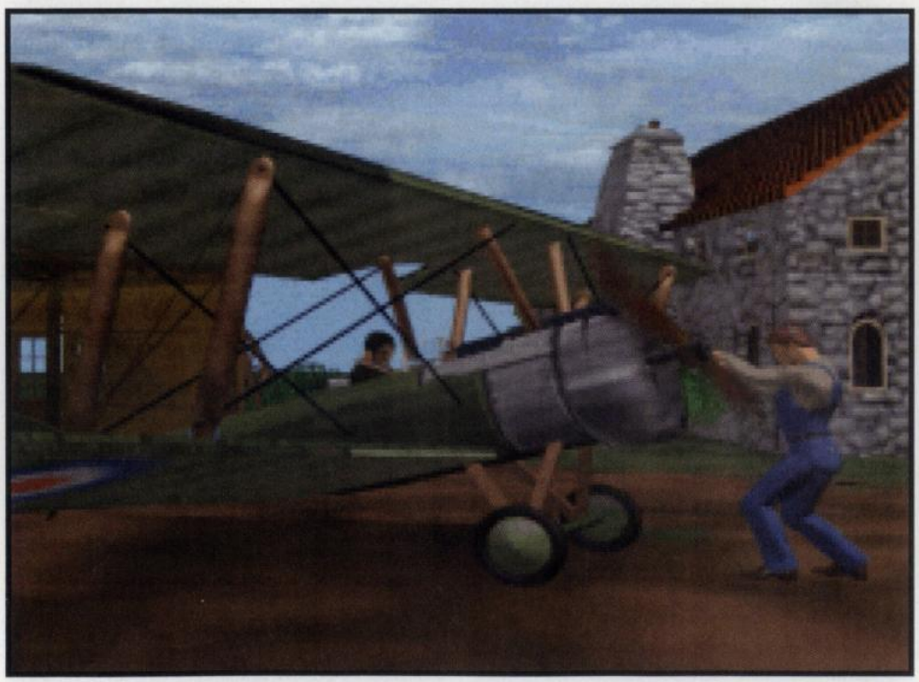
My personal favourite sim based around the SPADs, Camels and Pups of World War One was *Red Baron* with its immediate gameplay, basic but effective graphics and the way in which you could journey through the war on either side of the trench. *Wings of Glory* plays the game from the Allied point of view and starts in 1917 with you as a clean-cut, square-jawed, American recruit, fresh out of flight school, effectively missing out half the war in the process. Given the available space on a CD, surely it wouldn't be too much to ask for British, French and maybe German characters to play.

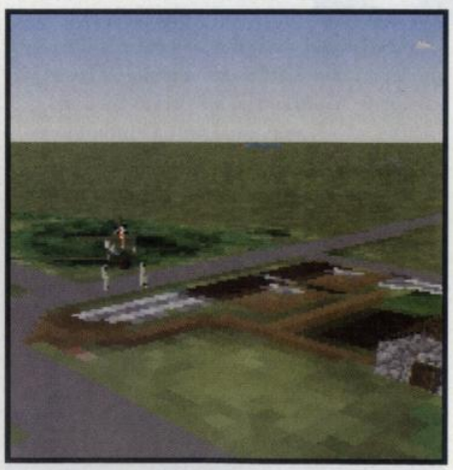
The graphics are the standard Origin mixed blessing – wonderful to look at but a drag to play on anything less than a hotshot PC. The office DX2 66 managed fairly well and it is possible to tone the graphics down on slower machines without losing too much of the atmosphere. A Pentium machine really shows *Wings of Glory* at its best.

The cut scenes are also up to Origin's mixed standards, yes they give the game atmosphere and flesh out the story, but I'd much rather be playing the game than sitting around listening to the CD drive whirring away. The only difference between the cut scenes in *Wings of Glory* and the ancient *Wing Commander I* is in the actual speech coming out through the speakers. The British officers all have stereotyped lah-de-dah accents and the American guy is a cool model of decency and rationality. Yuck!

A pleasing and redeeming feature of *Wings of Glory* is the Autopilot feature that can get you quickly into the air, into battle and back home without any of the hassle. The one problem is that when it drops your plane into combat you sometimes only have a few seconds to manoeuvre before you are being perforated by enemy fire.

The feeling of combat in *Wings*, once you get there, is great. The creaking airframe as you make radical turns is a great little feature of the game. Your flight and the enemy meet in a hail of white tracer before splitting up into a melee of individual combats and opportunity shots. With the detailed graphics and the high quality sounds it is an engaging experience as





▲ French peasant girls ahoy!

◀ Chocks away and all that.

you take on enemy planes, airships and balloons with your guns, and ground targets with bombs and rockets.

The external views allow you to keep a look out for sneaky enemies trying to shoot off your tail and you can adjust various difficulty factors to make your life easier or harder as required.

A mission in *Wings of Glory* begins with your flight sitting on the ground. Kick the throttle up to full and your plane rolls down the grassy field to take off speed. If this is a bit daunting for you then hitting the autopilot will get you safely into the air.

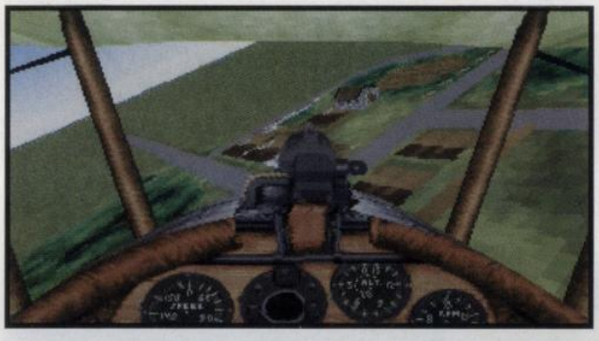
For your first mission it's a good idea just to get used to handling the Pup. Once you are confident of your flying skills hit autopilot again to fly into the enemy. The purple dots on the horizon are the bad guys. Since both sets of planes have front mounted guns, charging in head-on isn't really a very good idea, a quick swing out to the side will give you a shooting angle as you close. A quick strafing burst usually won't be enough to take the opponent out, so manoeuvre like hell to get on the enemy plane's tail.

Your wingmen should take care of the other bandit, so take your time and use short bursts when he's dead in your sights. Eventually, he'll be nothing but a smudge on the texture map. Your next target will be the bomber, which poses a different problem. It has a moving machine gun in the rear, therefore the best assault is from below where he can't shoot you to bits. This position is hard to achieve since the enemy won't casually fly along in a straight line for you to manoeuvre around.

If you're lucky, your wingman will come into assist and draw fire, and if you're even luckier, or just slightly skillful, then the evil Hun will be winging his way vertically down to oblivion. When he's dead, hit the autopilot to return home victoriously.

Overall *Wings of Glory* is a good game let down by the overly glossy presentation. The in-game experience is a million miles away from the hi-tech radar and missiles of your F-16 from *Strike Commander* and it is this difference that makes *Wings of Glory* well worth getting, even if you own quite a few modern aircraft simulators.

Price	£39.99
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Tel	01753 549442
Requirements	486DX 33, 8Mb RAM, 15Mb HD, double speed CD
Why?	Great atmosphere and good gameplay
Why not?	Needs a fast system, story detracts from game
Rating	80%



◀ Time to rudely awaken some French peasants, pre-revenge for events eighty years later

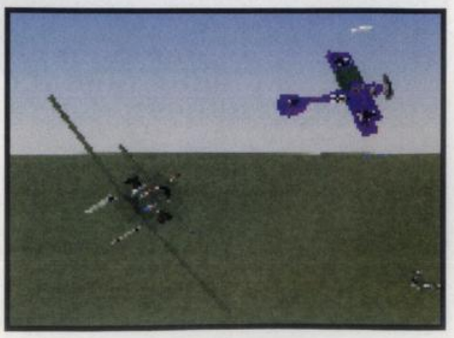
▶ It's my boss and he doesn't appear to be very happy with me

▼ Look everyone – rendered intro time!

▲ My wingman and winner of the thinnest moustache award

▼ Come 'ere, you leather trouser-wearing, sausage-sucking stereotype!

◀ For reasons of climate, nude flying was never practised by either side in World War One



Woodruff
and the Schnibble of Azimuth

French software houses have always been way up there as far as PC games go. **Dino Boni** investigates the latest adventure from Coktel Vision.

MANKIND has always been on the brink of destruction; sooner or later it was bound to happen. Launching massive nuclear attacks against itself, mankind's last remaining survivors had to take to living underground to escape the deadly radiation that now almost covered the planet, leaving pockets of pathetic survivors behind.

Over 700 years, these survivors have mutated into a race known as the Boozooks. Human in appearance, apart form their comically large ears and noses, these mutants lived peacefully until the faithful day arrived and the humans emerged from their underground hide-outs and set about claiming back their world. Enslaving many of the Boozooks, the humans built a city and condemned the Boozooks to second-rate citizenship for all eternity.

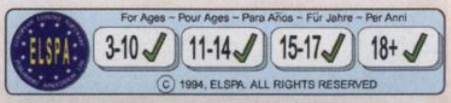
Woodruff is a baby Boozook, who lives with his adopted father Azimuth. Azimuth is a bit of a genius, and delights in messing around with time. One faithful day, as Azimuth is working on his latest device, he is kidnapped by unknown forces. Before they crash through his front door, he puts his device onto his son and stuffs him in the bin, safe from his captors.

The device Azimuth put onto Woodruff's head makes him grow up with miraculous speed, but denies him some of the abilities that we take for granted – such as reading. Dragging these handicaps behind him, Woodruff must rescue his father and discover the meaning of the word 'Schnibble', which is being repeated throughout the city. Could this be the end of the human's iron-fist rule?

Woodruff is a Windows point-and-click adventure which, on the surface, is very impressive. Installation is very simple and providing your Windows system can handle a fairly high resolution and 256 colours, the graphics and animation look like they have been expertly drawn by Tex Avary himself.

The game starts with you growing up via the time device, and plonked outside your house. Unfortunately, you don't know who you are so talking to people is vital if you're going to get anywhere in the game. The interaction with other characters is limited to a single line of conversation, or you can give them objects from your inventory. The speech and lip-synching, however, is very good indeed and if you take into account the great storyline, fantastic graphics and bizarre humour, this game should be a classic.

I say 'should be' because of one big reason. *Woodruff* is lacking the certain something that made other humorous point-and-click adventures (such as *Day of the Tentacle*) so enthralling and addictive. *Woodruff* is a good game, filled with fiendish puzzles and some truly funny moments, but it just doesn't seem to have the necessary bite to keep you playing. This is a competent adventure that will keep many people entertained for a while, and keep them laughing a little bit longer. Whether or not they keep laughing and playing really depends on the player. A definite try-before-you-buy game.



Price	£39.99
Publisher	Sierra On-Line
Tel	01734 303322
Requirements	386DX, 4Mb RAM, VGA, Windows 3.x, CD-ROM Drive, hard drive, mouse
Why?	Some fantastic animation, funny in places
Why not?	Not addictive enough to keep you playing for long
Rating	72%

▲ Boozooks are more or less the same as human beings, but the physical differences are readily apparent

▲ The bar is a wealth of information, as long as you know the right people to talk to

◀ This is where it all starts. After the time device has made Woodruff older, he is all alone with the future of the Boozooks in his hands

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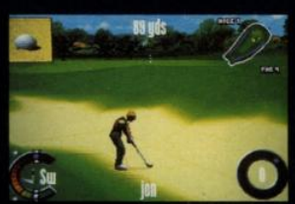
THE SCOTTISH OPEN



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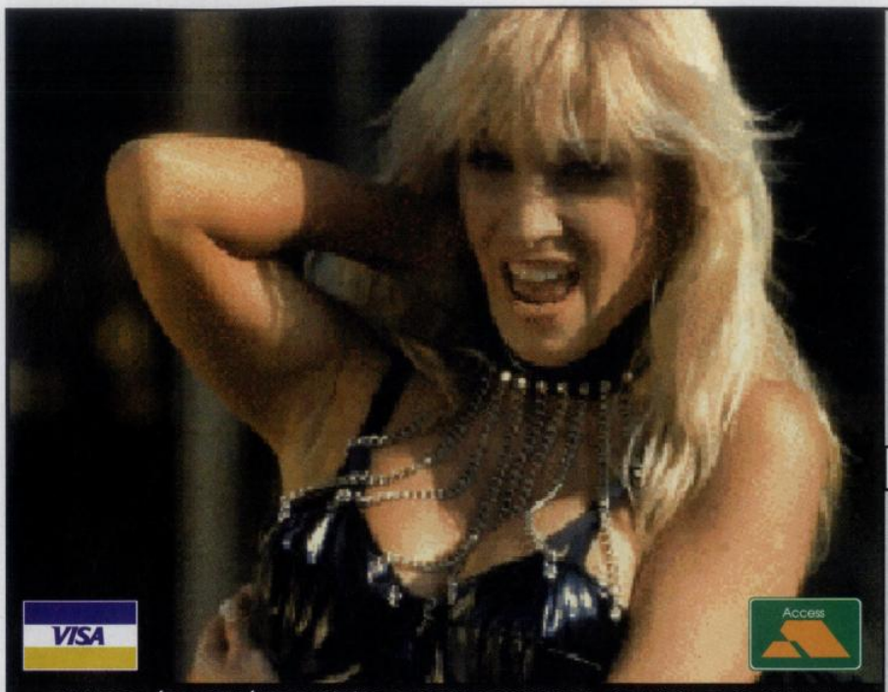

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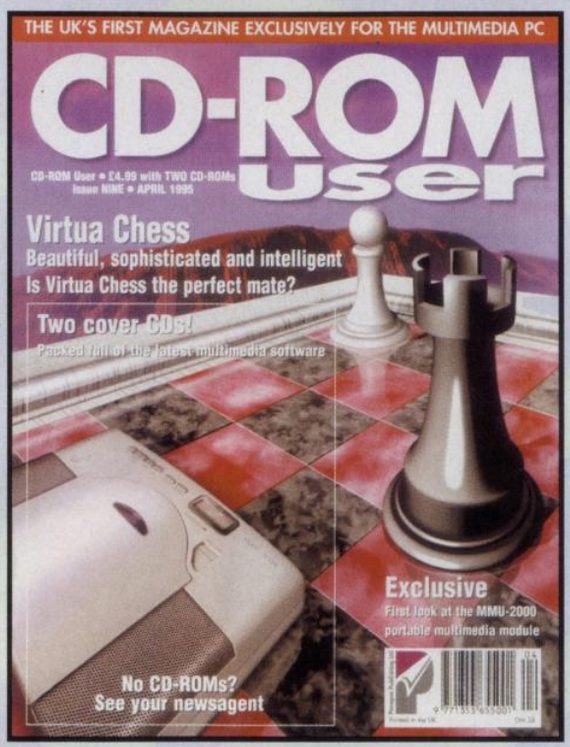
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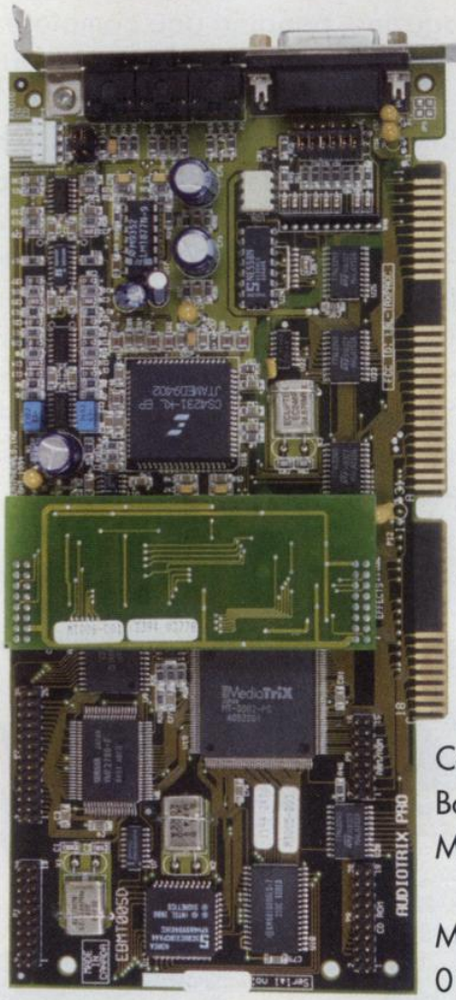

WHEN *CD-ROM User* reviewed Mediatrix's Audiotrix, we thought it was the best sounding card on the market. In fact in February 1995, we awarded it five stars and declared it a best buy. It features full wave table synthesis, a DSP upgrade and a host of software to make sure that you get the most out of it.

The card and DSP upgrade normally retails for around £350, but thanks to those great people at Koch Media, we have one to give away. With one of these in your PC, you can make your computer sound like a complete orchestra and add dimensions to your multimedia software that you never new existed.

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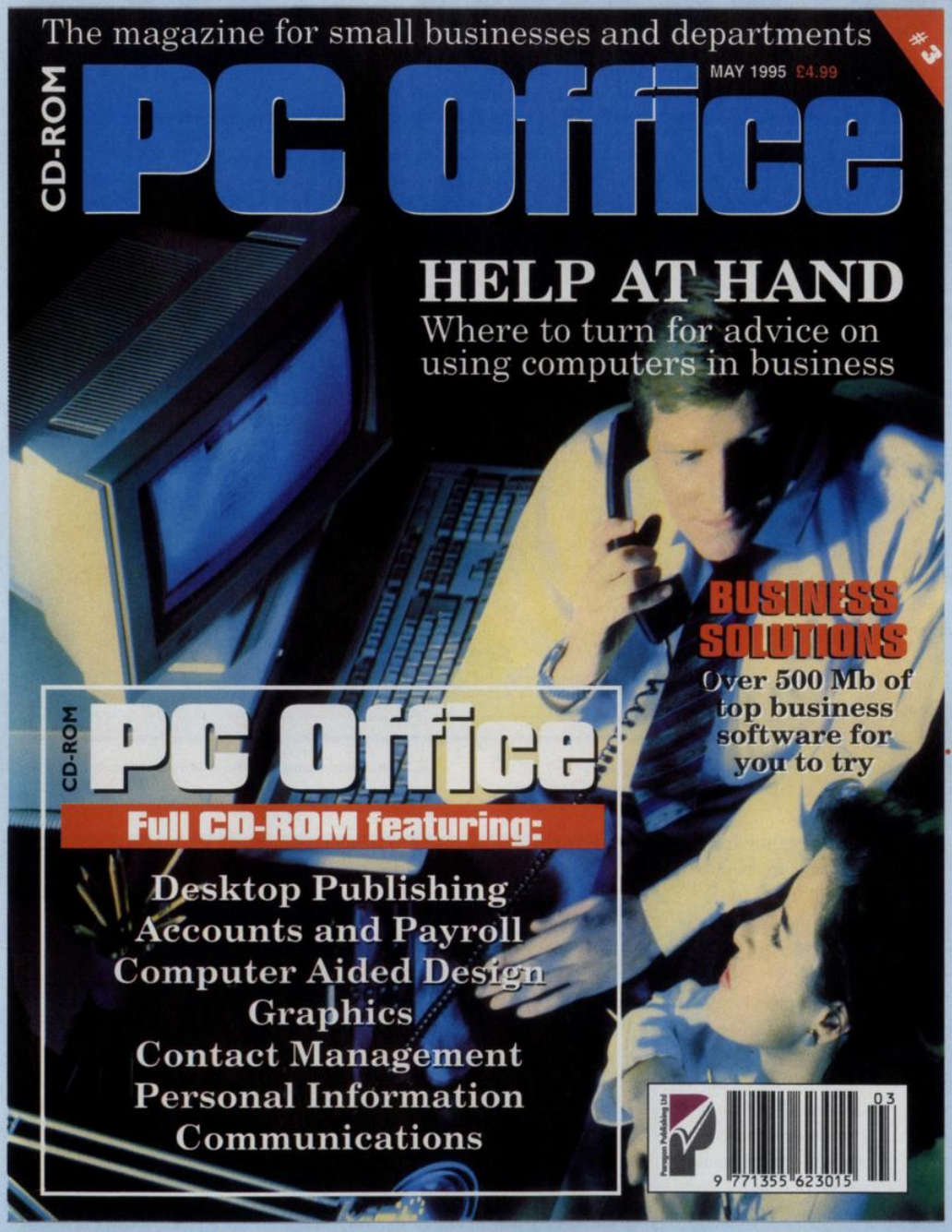

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Multimedia meets the World Wide Web

There are many reasons why you should add a modem to your multimedia shopping list. **Geoff Spick** explains.

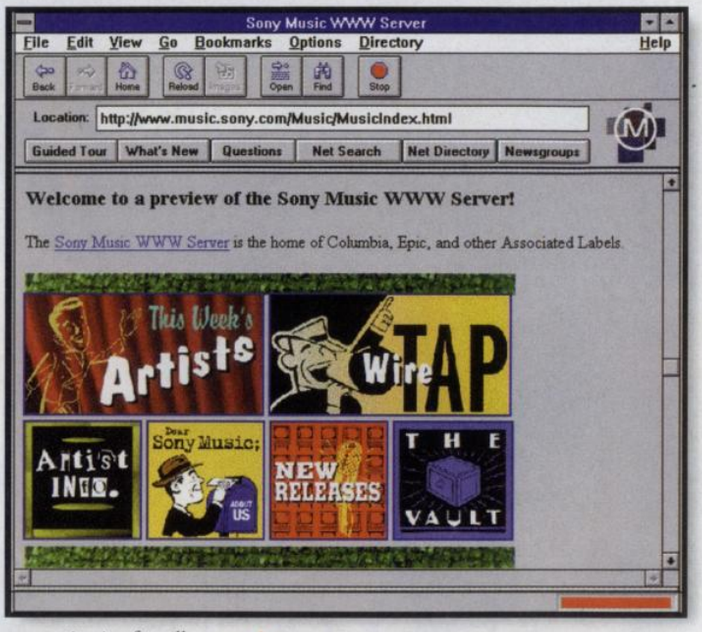
The prime reason for spending your hard-earned credit on a modem is called the World Wide Web – a multimedia interface that combines text, sound and graphics on one screen. This may be old news for owners of any GUI but it has totally converted attitudes to the Internet. For a start, you no longer need to know arcane commands and register codes to get yourself online. Getting into the Internet is now as simple as clicking on a window, and browsing through the many terrabytes of data is just as easy, with every location and subject becoming interlinked into an almost seamless page on your screen, irrelevant of where in the physical world the data is actually stored.

It's all very well knowing that the Internet is now easy to use, but what you want to know is what you can get out of it. Read on.

Of most practical use to ordinary people is the support available for your hardware and software. All the major companies now have online help centres that improve on traditional methods in many ways. The obvious method of improvement is that fix and patch files can be kept online ready for you to download instantly. On Compuserve's many help forums, lists of all common and uncommon problems are kept on file for you to check. On many forums, such as the IBM customer support forum, there are also qualified support staff whom you can E-mail for assistance regarding all IBM products.

Creative Labs is among many other multimedia manufacturers that use online support. Most companies also run conferences to keep both customer and company in touch with the latest developments and news on a daily basis. This has led to a new level in customer relations for companies. Suggestions for updates to existing products and features for new ones have never been more easy to send and debate in open forum with representatives of the company.

In terms of using the Internet for multimedia, the most obvious use is as a library for multimedia files. Due to the immense size and global nature of the Internet, there are repositories for all types of files covering all types of subject matter.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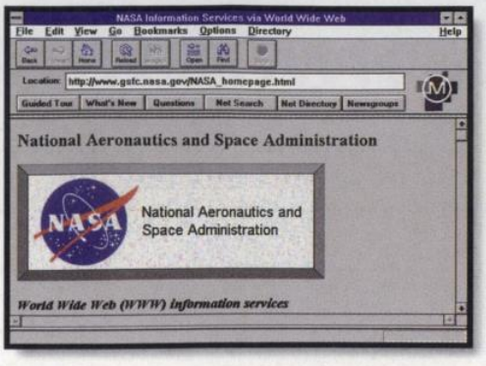
▲ Just one example of the entertainment corporations getting online

One of the many growing areas in Iternet use is by major music corporations who are promoting their artists on line with the latest news about the artists, biogs and clips or entire tracks of audio and video performances, often of rare or unique material, such as live footage. Indie labels and unsigned bands are also beginning to promote themselves over the Internet, What easier way is there to let the world hear your songs?

▲ Everything you could ever need from a video library

▼ NASA has a substantial Web presence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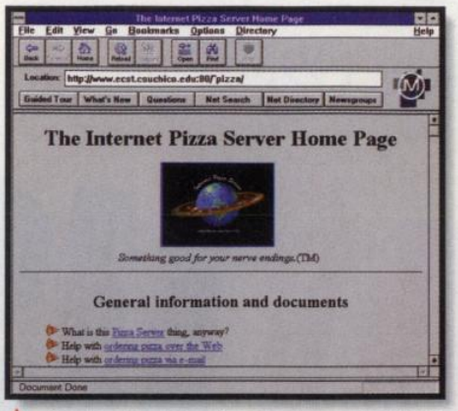
World Wide Web (WWW) information services

Not far behind the music corporations, Hollywood has also seen the benefit of using the Internet as a promotional tool. Recently there was an Internet launch of the latest Arnie movie 'Junior'. It contained video of the premiere and clips from the film, messages from the stars and other information. Other studios are likely to follow suit and, as well as new films, they are likely to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▲ **Send anchovy-laden pizzas to your enemies, thanks to the Web**

create archives about their back catalogues and histories to allow people to better explore the world of cinema.

A recent boom area of the World Wide Web has been the tourism industry, with cities and countries creating their own online brochures to attract visitors from around the world. Using multimedia they can create a far more attractive brochure that includes sights and sounds, and up-to-date lists of attractions that combine to vastly improve on the paper-based variety lurking in your travel shop.

Obviously, copyright law is a major factor in these activities, but as long as the rightful copyright holder places these files on the Internet and people download them for their own use, then everything is okay. However, if someone dumps copyrighted material over the Internet without permission, they are likely to be hit with the full weight of a lawyer or two, although the global nature of the Internet makes prosecution a difficult prospect and usually the removal of the offending material is sufficient to get the company to call off the dogs.

Amateur productions, on the other hand, are largely unbound by copyright and are a growing area of the Internet. Aside from music, there are lots of video and graphic archives appearing on the Internet. One major recent feature is a huge growth in the use of the Internet as an art gallery.

New galleries spring up every week, giving artists a chance to show off their creations to the world. Some use the digital media as a blank canvas, others digitise their traditional work. In some places, both types are for sale, signifying the increasing commercialisation of the Internet.

This commercialisation is spreading at an extreme rate, new sites offering products and information for sale are appearing daily. Pizza Hut is online, there are book stores, computer stores, flower shops and magazine subscriptions all available at the click of a mouse button. The major credit card companies are looking into providing online services enabling secure transfer of the new Holy Grail of the information age, your credit card number.

The number of companies sprouting up that offer to sell advertising space on the Internet is growing even faster as the quick buck merchants spy a new target to prey on. This may not be good from a solid business point of view but it is highlighting the potential of the market. Some offer genuine services and those that try to advertise themselves to all corners of the Internet, breaking the code of conduct, risk the wrath of any and all offended users.

This kind of growth will only end when your local corner shop starts taking orders by E-mail and it's not going to go away, so if you don't like it, tough! You may as well take advantage of it and get on with your life.

Elsewhere on the Internet the growing use of MPEG and Quicktime are allowing video to be easily transferred over the Internet. Admittedly, download time is a nightmare for the ordinary modem user due to the size of large MPEG files, but as transfer speeds increase this becomes a more pleasant prospect.

The type of video being downloaded is as widespread as the Internet itself. Hobbyists sling all kinds of relevant material around the Net, fan groups can worship their idols in digital video format. Bootleg music and video are widespread. At the other end of the scale organisations like NASA can keep the public up to date with their missions using the Web to publish video and stills. It beats waiting for the Sky at Night. Events like the observations of the Shoemaker-Levy comet crashing into Jupiter would have been far harder to run without the aid of the Internet for rapid communications between all the observation sites in the world that were watching the collisions.

To get additional use out of your sound card you can also download a huge variety of music files from the Internet be they midi, mods or wavs, there are huge collections of them on the Internet and individual BBS sites. If you are seriously into music then there is lots of software to suit your needs including sound banks and patch programs for all makes of keyboard and setup.

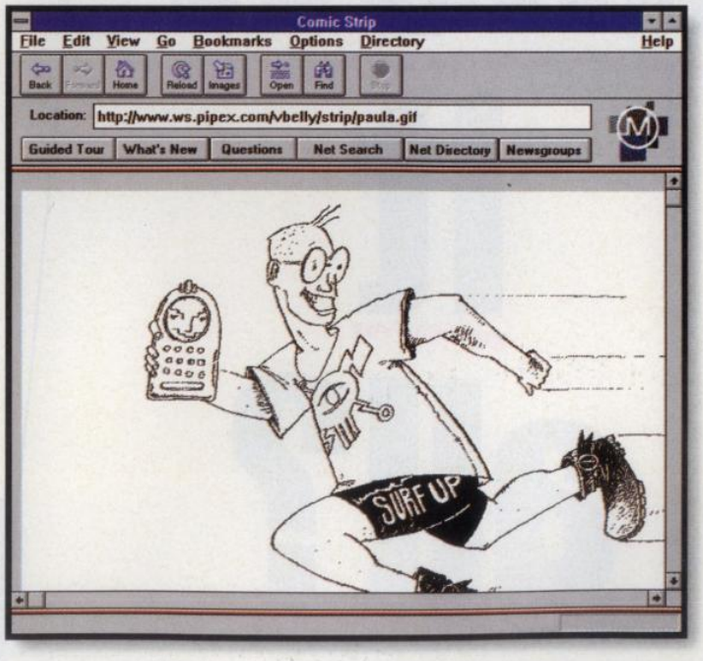
The unregulated and often 'adult' nature of the Internet means that all kinds of mature entertainment can be found, ranging from insane D.I.Y. science experiments (flamethrower pop tarts anyone?) to the World's first cyber brothel. Lets face it, you didn't buy that MPEG card just to watch the Shoe People on Video CD. All sorts of weird groups and cults can be found within the depths of the Internet. "If you don't approve, don't look" is the only regulation currently in place.

Whatever you are after, you can find it on the Internet, and if you don't go to the Internet, eventually the Internet will come to you!

▼ **Tour the world. (Glamourous travel guide not supplied)**

LA PIAZZA
File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Help
Location: http://lapiazza.it.net/Tourism/index.html
Guided Tour | What's New | Questions | Net Search | Net Directory | Newsgroups
LA PIAZZA
THE ITALIAN MARKET PLACE
Tourism
Genova Information Page
Document Done

▼ **Well comics are art aren't they?**


Comic Strip
File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Help
Location: http://www.ws.pipex.com/vbelly/strip/paula.gif
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TITUS

CD-ROM User, in association with Telstar and Titus, offer the new Telstar CD-ROM Box Set at a bargain price.

WITH the memory of Christmas 1994 now in the back of our minds, you will now be looking for some seriously fun software to run on that new CD-ROM drive that Father Chrimble brought for you. If you would like an economically sound fun injection (and who wouldn't?) then why not take advantage of the CD-ROM User/Telstar/Titus 10 games on one CD offer? For a mere £19.99 you get 10 PC games on one CD-ROM. As if browsing through an old curiosity shop, this compilation of Titus classics is sure to have something in there for everyone. If platform games are your forte, you could try out one of the record-slinging *Blues Brothers* adventures, *Titus the Fox*, *Prehistorik 1 & 2* or *Super Cauldron*. Shoot'em-up fans will no doubt love to get their mitts on *Battlestorm*, while boy and girl racers will want to hog the CD so that they can play *Fire and Forget II* and *Crazy Cars 3*. And that's not it either – grannies, daddies, babies and even doggies will love to play *Titan* – a fast paced brain game with a bouncing ball.

If that little lot appealed to your gaming sensibilities, then send the completed coupon to **Telstar Offer, Paragon Publishing, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 1NF**, or call out credit card hotline on **01202-780578**.

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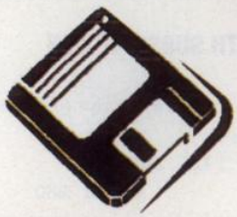
Readers Writes



This is your chance to to tell us what you think about CD-ROM User and the world of multimedia, we have teamed up with Rubysoft who will award the top selling CD-ROM in their catalogue to the author of the best letter received. Send your letters to: CD-ROM User, Durham House, 124 Old Christchurch Road , Bournemouth BH1 1NF. Internet users can send E-mail to: CDROMUSER@DELPHI.COM.

Interwhat?

WHEN I bought my PC over five years ago, DOS commands were a user's best friend. There were a multitude of books and articles on "How to defy DOS", "1001 Favourite Batch File Routines" and " A DOS is for Life, Not Just for Christmas". Needless to say, the complexity of it all was Tedium Extraordinaire.

Things became easier with the arrival of Windows 3 and 3.1, DOS routines are largely redundant and today, I'm still absolutely amazed by apps like *Xplora1* and *Encarta* and stereo musical scores in games. In the old days, monochrome 2-D charts were the closest thing to graphics and the only sounds emitted where when my keyboard locked or a virus rampaged my hard disk.

So it is with some surprise that the Next-Big-Thing in PC circles (The Internet), reverts back to the quirkiness of the command line. I was pretty proficient with DOS, but UNIX gave me the chills. To surf the Superhighway, I need to time travel back to the late 80's and enter an incomprehensible multitude of characters and strings.

For example, what does "ftp://ftp.netcom.com/pub/lweitzel/wow/home.html." really mean? More importantly, is it necessary? After typing all that, I surely would have lost interest. The last language I learned was French at 11 and life's too short to learn another. As far as the Internet is concerned, we are back to the dark ages of computing. The group that develops a better way will surely make a fortune.

If it takes so much effort to join the latest bandwagon, I'll happily stay at home, download software from my cover CD-ROM and send email...to myself...with a stamp!

Terry Vassell, London

CD-ROM User: *For the last twenty or so years the Internet was purely the preserve of scientists and techies the world over who understood things like ftp and unix. Only recently has the public taken an interest in the Internet and it has taken a while for an interface to emerge which the general user can get to grips with. In the same way that Windows took over from DOS, the World Wide Web is taking over from these archaic systems. The WWW is a totally graphical interface that in its current form gives access to almost every area of the Internet.*

Your complaint about ftp://ftp.netcom.com/pub.... is valid, but you must remember that all the computers attatched to the Internet require an address in the same way streets and houses need them. Imagine how the Post Office would work if no one had an address. The same applies to the Internet. In answer to your question. ftp:// *stands for the type of program you are going to use. Ftp.netcom.com/ is the address of the computer you are going to link to and pub/weitzel/wow/home .html is the location and name of the file you are going to access. It is well worth getting to grips on the Internet, not just for downloading files but for finding out information, talking to people from all over the world with similar interests and the spread of e-mail is likely to make it a necessity for most companies before long.*

Eager friends from down under

I EAGERLY look forward to the arrival of *CD-ROM User* each month as I have learned most of what I know about multimedia computing from its excellent articles and the cover disc software. I have only just obtained the December issue (five) and was disappointed to be unable to boot it by using the icon or the program or file managers. It appears that "AAPLAY.DLL" is missing from the file directory. Is there any way of using the file from the previous discs to run the disc menu? Will it be possible to obtain an issue five disc containing this file?

I guess that PC Wise will look after your U.K readers, but I do hope that something can be done for myself and others "way down under" to rectify the omission.

I have been able to load and run some of the programs from file manager. One of these was the Doom sampler, unfortunately an error message informed me that the mouse driver in use was not suitable. Could you let me know which driver is recommended for this program?

Thank you once again for providing a most attractive and informative magazine.

Ken Keesing, South Perth, West Australia

CD-ROM User: *You should find the file AAPLAY.DLL on any disk that contains the program AAPLAY for Windows, copying this to the Windows system directory should get you up and running. The Doom sampler should only be run from DOS, trying it from Windows will only end up in disaster. Thank you for your kind comments about our magazine. We try very hard to keep the quality level of the magazine high and are constantly looking to improve the standard.*

And the lucky winner is...

I am writing to you to thank you for forwarding my prize of the REAL MAGIC CD-ROM upgrade kit. It was a wonderful surprise because I am not one for winning prizes.

May I take this opportunity of congratulating you on a truly magnificent magazine, it gives me many hours of pleasant and stimulating reading. There is only one fault that spoils the layout of the publication and that is to do with the competitions. The cut-out entry forms always seem to back onto an article of interest, so on entering these competitions it does tend to spoil the magazine, for keeping for future reference.

I hope you take note and change this very minor detail. Once again thanks and keep up the good work.

Henry F. Taylor, Blackpool

CD-ROM User: *Firstly it is our pleasure to offer decent prizes to our readers. We're also pleased that you like the magazine, you wouldn't believe the amount of effort that goes into getting CD-ROM User out on the shelves and it is nice to know that someone appreciates the efforts of all those involved.*

Regarding competition entries; there are other options. Rather than cutting competiton forms out of the magazine (and thus losing articles of interest) you could always photocopy your entry or send it on a postcard – both are acceptable.

Welcome to the machine

HAVING become very interested recently in personal computing through a friend of mine who has recently purchased one, I would like a list of machines or suppliers I can write to who may be able to explain the 'minefield' of conflicting information.

The machine he has (I don't know the make) consists of main computer with CD and disk drive, monitor, keyboard, twin speakers and 'jet' printer. This is the type of setup I fancy, being a total new-comer to computing, your magazine whilst being an excellent source of information (I *shall* continue buying it) when you have a machine is very confusing when it lists only individual parts of machines, add-ons, etc. with no indication of levels of computer knowledge.

I have recently retired and have the necessary time to devote to what I see as a very absorbing hobby, but have very little practical experience to date.

I would appreciate any information to help me purchase the right machine I can add to at a later date, but starting at the idiot level in knowledge.

Many thanks.

Mr. M. Mutton, Aberdeenshire

CD-ROM User: *Despite the varying claims of most manufacturers, the PC's they sell are simply a collection of similar components. In your letter you fail to mention what you'd like to use your computer for, so this answer should be treated as only a guide.*

The most important component within any PC is the processor chip. For whatever you want to do, the minimum we recommend for a multimedia PC is a 486DX2-66. The next part of the system is called RAM, this is the computers memory and just like your *memory the more there is the more you can remember. 8Mb of RAM is considered sufficient for current needs. As a first time buyer your best bet is to buy a single multimedia package with all the peripherals included.*

Finally you have to choose where to buy from. Shops usually offer a limited choice, but at least offer a human face to deal with. Mail order offer competitive prices but most sales and enquiry lines expect some knowledge on your part. A good system can be bought for around £1000. Shop around and it could be less.

The wide world of statistics

I HAVE been a reader of *CD-ROM User* for four months now and have been impressed with the breadth of knowledge and professionalism which you have quickly brought to bear in this new field of computer software.

As well as being a post-graduate student at the London School of Economics, I have become a regular user of CD-ROMs both at home and in my department. I am currently working on a project which involves formulating a marketing strategy for a company entering a growing industry. I have chosen the CD-ROM market as just such an industry; I am therefore engaged in gathering information on the following aspects of the market in the UK and the rest of Europe, where possible:

- Information on disc sales
- Competition in the marketplace – retail vs. mail-order: competition within mail-order
- Market profile by type of end-user (business, domestic, etc.)
- Penetration of CD-ROM players into the home and business markets

I would grateful if you could assist me in obtaining information on any of the above, or perhaps advise me of the best sources from which to obtain this, or any other relevant information.

Thank you for your time. I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Ikenna C. Onyejiaka, London

CD-ROM User: *I'm afraid the information you're after is somewhat out of our area. Computer Retail News is probably your best bet for these kind of statistics. Some manufacturers may be willing to give out some non-sensitive information on their sales breakdown. The competition between retailers vs mail order is also a tricky area since retailers break down into further categories along the lines of chain store, independant store and computer store, each with different market aims and capabilities.*

An unhappy bunny in stereo

I DON'T normally buy *CD-ROM User* magazine, but I saw this month's edition and noticed you had a programme entitled *Stereoworld*. And, as an avid Stereogram freak I decided to purchase a copy for the programmed contained within the disc.

However, once I got it home to my disappointment I could not get the darn programme to work! Now I know I am not the world's greatest computer expert and I may be doing something wrong, but I do think it's a faulty programme, I've tried:

- running it from the CD menu
- installing it from the CD menu
- running it from the programme manager
- installing it from the programme manager
- running it from DOS
- installing it from DOS
- as all above, with and without QEMM
- from clean boots, etc, etc. to no avail

I read through your magazine and found it very interesting, and you say that the CDs are tested. I don't think you tested this one.

I am most disappointed, but this only goes to prove a theory of mine, and that is, nobody is giving anything away these days.

And if this is your standard, I shall not be purchasing your magazine again.

Nick Thompson, Wolverhampton

CD-ROM User: *Firstly let me assure you that all the programs on CD-ROM User discs are tested and we can confirm that Stereoworld does work. However, the installation program we were given does seem to have thrown up some problems. It should work correctly if you manually copy the entire /STEREO directory and subdirectories to your hard disk from within DOS. Make sure your mouse driver is loaded, enter the directory and type STERWRLD to run.*

CD-ROM User

Glossary

APPLICATION
Software which performs some useful task (such as a word processor, spreadsheet, database or whatever)

ASCII
Acronym for *American Standard Code for Information Interchange*. The system by which letters, punctuation, space, control codes, etc. are encoded into numeric values for interpretation by the computer.

AUTOEXEC
A batch file that automatically launches certain programs for you when the computer is switched on.

BACKUP
Copy of one or several files, usually on a different disk drive, in case the original(s) get lost, corrupted or destroyed. This may be due to an act of user, hardware failure or some other unfriendly act – like sudden loss of power or unfriendly action by other software

BASIC
Beginners All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code. A widely known programming language.

BATCH
A sequence of commands that perform a given task and can be put together into operation with a single command. Easily identified by the extension .BAT on filenames.

BAUD
The rate of information transfer between two terminals and/or peripherals. Often, but incorrectly, used as a synonym for *bits per second*. It actually refers to the number of times the signal changes per second. This is equivalent to the bits per second rate in many, but not all cases. A character-per-second value is usually reached by dividing a bits-per-second value by 10.

BBS
Bulletin Board Service. An information service which can be remotely accessed by connecting a computer to a telephone line via a modem. Bulletin boards provide message exchange facilities, information, advice and software which can be downloaded onto the remote computer.

BENCHMARK
A program used to test and compare different hardware and software systems and compare their performance to known parameters

BINARY
The fundamental language of the computer itself. Letters and numbers are represented by groups of ones and zeros; these in turn represent the off-and-on flow of electricity through the circuitry of the microprocessor. A condition in which there are two possible alternatives.

BIOS
Basic Input Output System. The section of the operating system which creates a record of hardware present and is responsible for interfacing to that hardware.

BIT
Short for BInary digiT. It represents the smallest unit of information in a digital computer, can have a value of either 1 or 0 and represents a switch.

BOOT
Short for *bootstrap*, refers to the initial commands necessary to load the remainder of the operating system.

BOOTABLE DISK
Able to start the computer up. Also used to describe the diskette containing a copy of the operating system, known as a bootable or system disk.

BUFFER
A storage area of memory that holds data during transfer from one device to another. Buffers often compensate for differing rates of flow between terminals and/or peripherals.

BUG
Error, mistake or problem in hardware, software or anything else to do with computers.

BULLETIN BOARD
See **BBS**.

BYTE
A unit of storage. One byte is equivalent to one character, or 8 bits of storage.

CACHE MEMORY
A comparatively small amount of very fast memory which is closely coupled to the main processor.

CARRIAGE RETURN
Synonymous with the return lever of a typewriter, this key returns the cursor to the left margin and also provides an ENTER function. A carriage return is often used with a line feed to move the cursor to the beginning of the next lin

CD-ROM
Compact Disc Read Only Memory. The use of the familiar audio CD to store large amounts of data including text, pictures, video and music (up to 650Mb).

CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT (CPU)
The main functional unit of a microcomputer. It consists of a chip which executes program instructions and its surrounding circuitry. Often referred to as the *System board* or *Motherboard*. This chip performs all the primary handling of data and is often called the *computer* itself. These are identified normally by numbers (286, 386 and 486) though the 586 is normally referred to as a Pentium

CHIP
Also IC, Integrated Circuit, Microchip. It is the basic building block within the computer for the CPU and RAM memory.

CLOCK
The number of pulses per second produced by the computers clock, usually measured in MHz (megahertz) or millions of cycles per second.

CMOS
A memory chip that holds information about your computer and the devices attached. Power to the CMOS is backed up by a battery so that when you switch a computer off, this essential data is not lost.

COMMAND LINE
In DOS, where DOS commands are typed in, at the DOS prompt. This will probably start with:C:\> or A:\>
at least when you first start the computer up.

COMMUNICATIONS PORT
(Also known as COMMS PORT)
Plug or socket on a computer (or printer) used for input or output communications between computer and peripherals. The most usual types on PCs are parallel and serial ports.

COMPATIBLE
A general term that indicates the ability of one piece of software or hardware to work with the commands or communications of another as easily as if both were made by the same supplier.

COMPATIBLE-PC
See **IBM-COMPATIBLE**.

CONTEXT-SENSITIVE
Usually refers to help screens which change to refer to the current task, function or operation you are using.

COPROCESSOR
A second processor which augments the arithmetic capabilities of the main processor. Also known as a maths or floating point coprocessor.

COPY
To duplicate. A software command which can occur between disk and memory, disk and disk, file and file.

CPS
Characters per second, the standard measure of printer speed.

CPU
See **CENTRAL PROCESSING UNIT**.

CURSOR
A marker or indicator displayed on the monitor, which directs the viewers attention to the position of the next letter, number or object on screen.

DATABASE
A piece of software allowing the easy storage, organisation, processing and retrieval of organised information.

DATA FILES
We use this term as a shorthand for the files created within an application program by a user, holding work the user has generated. These may be word processed documents, spreadsheets or whatever

DD
Double Density. A method of encoding data for storage on hard or floppy disk to a maximum of 360K for 5.25in disks and 720K for 3.5in disks.

DEBUG
To find and correct all the errors in a program or in the hardware. Also the name of a DOS debugging utility software.

DESKTOP
Configuration of a PC where it sits on a desk (horizontally), as opposed to a tower configuration PC which stands on the ground or floor on its side (vertically).

DIRECTORY
An area on a disk where related files are stored together. For instance all files for MSDOS are in the DOS directory.

DISK
A direct access storage device made from a flat circular disk (or disks) of magnetic material. See **FLOPPY DISK**, **HARD DISK**.

DISK DRIVE
A peripheral device that reads information from and writes information to a disk.

DOS
Disk Operating System. A program which lets you use the facilities of a disk-based computer (for example; storing, retrieving and copying files, organising the RAM, looking after important input/output procedures etc.)
See **MS-DOS**.

DOT-MATRIX PRINTER
A type of printer that creates images by impressing a series of dots very close together so that the character produced appears solid. The print head is a matrix of pins and more pins give higher definition. Typical arrays are 9-pin (lower quality) and 24-pin (higher quality).

DRIVER
A portion of the computers operating system which handles the input and output (I/O) to peripheral devices. The driver is also known as a device handler.

DTP
Desk Top Publishing. Normally referring to software packages which allow documents to be designed and assembled on screen (including layout and formatting of text, illustrations, photographs and other graphics). DTP provides complete control over all stages in the production of documents.

EISA
Acronym for Extended Industry Standard Architecture. The design of the expansion slot which is compatible with normal 8 bit or 16 bit cards but offers high performance when used with special 32 bit EISA expansion cards.

E-MAIL
Electronic Mail. Use of computers and associated software to send and receive messages across internal networks or to remote computer systems (connected via a telephone and modem). Also a term to describe the software used for sending and receiving these messages.

EXPANSION SLOT
Space and socket within a PC which allows additional hardware to be added in the form of an expansion card. With several different types of slot now in use, it is important to know how to recognise the differences. Consult your computer manual for more information.

FILES
Named storage units on a disk which hold information, either programs that will carry out instructions, or your data.

FILENAMES
In DOS filenames consist of three parts:
FILENAME (up to 8 characters)
(dot=full stop)
EXTENSION (up to 3 characters)
Examples; AUTOEXEC.BAT, MENU.TXT

FLOPPY DISK
A flexible disk of magnetic material (protected by a PVC envelope) used to store data and program. Floppy disks are most commonly either 3.5in or 5.25in diameter.

GB
Gigabyte. Used to describe a memory size of 1,073,741,824 bytes (1 Gb equals 1,024 megabytes).

GRAPHICAL USER INTERFACE (GUI)
Modern, popular way of programs displaying and receiving input from a user, using pictures as a basis as well as, or instead of command words. Based on the *WIMP* philosophy of: *Windows, Icons, Mouse and Pointer* or Pull-down Menus

HARD COPY
Computer slang or jargon for printed output.

HARD DISK
A rigid metal disk coated with magnetic material, which has a far greater storage capacity than a floppy disk. Some hard disks are removable, but the read/write heads are enclosed with the disks in a special container which prevents dust or other contamination from contacting the disk.

HARDWARE
The mechanical and electrical or hard part or physical part of a computer system. This is in contrast to software, the programs that are executed by the hardware.

HD
High Density. A phrase used in connection with floppy disks (3.5in and 5.25in) a high density 3.5in disk can store 1.4Mb of data, a high density 5.25in disk can store 1.2Mb of data.

HEAD
The electromagnetic device, residing within the disk drive, that both reads and writes information on a floppy or hard disk.

HZ
Short for Hertz, one cycle per second.

ICON
Mini-picture intended to represent a piece of software or a file in a Graphical Interface or WIMP environment.

IDE
Intelligent Drive Electronics/Integrated Drive Electronics. IDE is a method of connecting disk drives to a computer. IDE drives have drive controller circuitry included with the drive electronics, this means that only simple interfacing circuits are required and these can be designed into the main circuit board (motherboard) or into an I/O board. This takes away the requirement for a separate disk controller card or circuit board.

I/O
Short for Input/Output.

INITIALISE
To set up in preparation for operation. For example, one initialises a disk by formatting it.

INSERT
Editing mode where new characters are inserted between characters already present. The converse is overtype mode. Can toggle between them using the INS key.

INTEGRATED CIRCUIT (IC)
See **CHIP.**

INTEGRATED SOFTWARE
(Also Integrated package)
A single piece of application software which combines in one package a word processor, a spreadsheet, a database and something else, often a communications, drawing or graphics package.

INTERLACED
A property of VDU monitors whereby a higher resolution is achievable but at the expense of an almost invisible flicker which can cause eye-strain and headaches. Avoid. For whatever screen resolution you need, choose a VDU which can provide it in a non-interlaced mode.

ISA
Acronym for Industry Standard Architecture.

ISDN
Integrated Services Digital Network. The name for the digital telephone network which contains channels for digitised speech (64Kbps) and for control at 8Kbps. The control channel can be used for information services to personal computers.

INTERFACE
The connection or boundary between any two parts of a computer system, including any of its devices, the software, or the human operator. Two components must be properly interfaced before they can interact.

INTERPRETER
A type of translator which converts a program into machine language (i.e. runs one line of code at a time). An interpreter accomplishes the translation process while the programme is running. dBASE is an example of an interpreter.

INTERRUPT
The method programs use to stop the operation in progress for new instructions.

KHZ
Short for Kilohertz or 1,000 cycles per second.

KILOBYTE (K)
1024 bytes, two raised to the tenth power. Since each byte represents one character, one kilobyte produces about 150 written words.

LOGICAL DRIVE
(As in LOGICAL HARD DISK DRIVE)
Where DOS thinks there are several separate hard disk drives, each with their own letters (e.g. C: and D:), but where they are in fact separate areas of a single physical hard disk unit.

MAIN MEMORY (RAM)
The electronic storage area of the computer itself, exclusive of disks or any other external memory. Programs and data to be processed are first loaded into the main memory, or RAM, from the disk. Main memory is volatile and will not retain data if power is removed.

MAIN UNIT
Main unit of a microcomputer which usually contains Memory (RAM), CPU, motherboard, Power Supply Unit (PSU) and space for several expansion boards.

MEGABYTE (MB)
In computing terms a megabyte equals approximately 1,048,576 bytes. The storage capacity of disks is measured in megabytes. Hard disks start at 40Mb of capacity, but this is not now a practical size and a minimum of 120Mb is more suitable, with larger capacities being required for multimedia requirements.
Also see **KILOBYTE**.

MEMORY
Any storage area for data and programs, internal or external to the computer.

MHZ
Short for Megahertz, or 1,000,000 cycles per second.

MICROSECOND
One millionth of a second.

MILLISECOND
One thousandth of a second.

MNEMONIC
A code or symbol that assists remembering its operation or purpose. For example, RET is a mnemonic for RETurn.

MODEM
Short for MODulator DEModulator. A modem converts signals generated by the computer into a form which can be transmitted over telephone lines or optical cables.

MONITOR
The display screen in a computer system.

MOTHERBOARD
The main printed circuit board on a computer which holds the:CPU chip, RAM chip(s) and BIOS chip.

MOUSE
A peripheral used to control cursor movements onscreen, as an alternative to the keyboard. Almost essential when using a Graphical Interface such as Microsoft's WINDOWS, or a drawing program.

MPC
An international standard for Multimedia PCs established by the Multimedia Marketing Council. Level One specified a minimum of a 286 processor, soundcard, speakers and CD-ROM drive. Level Two requires a minimum specification of 486SX processor, 16 bit soundcard, speakers and double speed CD-ROM drive. By definition, all Level Two machines automatically comply with the Level One spec.

MULTIMEDIA
Using your computer to handle a variety of different types of information including, text, sound and moving images.

MS-DOS
Microsoft Disk Operating System. The most widely used operating system for PCs.

MULTI -TASKING
A multi-tasking system allows two or more tasks or programs to be executed simultaneously.

NETWORK
A network connects PCs together, thus allowing you to share hard disks, printers and software.

ON-LINE
Immediately available from the computer.
e.g. On-line Help Screen. Available immediately a special key is pressed (usually F1)

OUTPUT
Information sent from a computer to a peripheral device such as a printer, disk drive or terminal.

OVERTYPE
Editing mode where new characters overwrite those already present. The converse of insert mode. Can toggle between them using the INS key.

PARALLEL (PORT or INTERFACE)
A communications port often used for connecting a printer to a PC. Also sometimes known as a Centronics port or interface.

PCB
See **PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD**.

PC-DOS
The operating system as used on genuine IBM computers. The version on almost all other personal computers is MS-DOS.

PERIPHERAL
An external device which is attached to the computer such as a disk drive, printer, terminal or modem.

PERSONAL COMPUTER (PC)
An IBM Compatible microcomputer

POINTER
Is an arrow-shaped cursor used in Graphical programs, especially Microsoft's WINDOWS, to indicate the current position pointed to by a mouse.

POWER SUPPLY UNIT (PSU)
Electrical transformer within the main unit of a PC, converting mains voltage down to the 12v or 5v that most components use.

PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARD (PCB)
Can be used to enhance the capabilities of a Personal Computer by putting it in to an available expansion slot.

PRINTER
A device which prints alphanumeric and graphical data that has been output from a computer. There are many different types of printers but they are all designed to produce images on paper.

PROMPT
The set of characters that appear on the command line before the space where you are able to type in commands. e.g. C:\> or A:\>

PSU
See **POWER SUPPLY UNIT**.

PUBLIC DOMAIN SOFTWARE
See **SHAREWARE**

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY (RAM)
The main memory in a computer composed of semiconductor material. It is also called Read/Write memory, meaning that the data can be easily read or altered. RAM is volatile and will lose its data if the power is removed.

READ ONLY MEMORY (ROM)
ROM is a type of memory which is non-volatile (is not lost when power to the computer is switched off). The contents of a ROM is permanently recorded and may be read by the CPU whenever needed.

ROOT DIRECTORY
The "contents" section of the disk where all other directories originate. For instance C:\> is the root directory of the C drive, C:\DOS> is the DOS subdirectory of C.

RUN
To start or execute a program.

SCREEN
See **VISUAL DISPLAY UNIT - VDU**

SCSI DEVICE
Small Computer Systems Interface, originally a standard developed fro Apple Macintosh computers but adopted for PCs. A device (card mounted) which allows multiple peripherals to be linked together. For example, a CD-ROM linked to a tape streamer, linked to a Syquest drive, linked to a hard disk linked to the computer. A maximum of seven SCSI devices can be controlled by one SCSI card. A series of peripherals linked this way are often referred to as *daisy chained.*

SERIAL (PORT or **INTERFACE)**
A communications port often used for connecting a printer or a mouse to a PC. More complicated to set up than a Parallel Port. Also known as a RS232 interface.

SHAREWARE
Software application programs available for minimal cost (the cost of the disk + P&P typically) whose authors have allowed them to be copied freely. Closely related to shareware are Freeware and Public Domain. Freeware is software that you can have and distribute for free, but the copyright is still owned by the author. Public Domain is software where the author has renounced the copyright and as such you can do with it as you please.

SIMMS
Single IN-Line Memory Module. A memory module, usually supplied in 256K, 1Mb and 4Mb sizes.

SOFTWARE
A series of instructions which is executed by the computer. A program or an application.

SPREADSHEET
A software application which is used to store and manipulate numbers and calculations. *Analogous to a word processor but for numbers.*

SUB-DIRECTORY
See **DIRECTORY**

SVGA
Super Video Graphics Array.

SYSTEM
A series of related parts or components which work together. A computer system contains elements such as a CPU, a terminal, a printer, an operating system and application software.

SYSTEM DISK
See **BOOTABLE DISK**.

SYSTEM UNIT
Term for the box which holds the main components of a personal computer, including the motherboard (including CPU and RAM chips); hard disk(s), floppy drive(s), expansion slots and the Power Supply Unit (PSU).
See also **MAIN UNIT.**

TOGGLE
To switch between two operations, usually by pressing the same key repeatedly.

TOWER
Configuration of a PC where it stands on the ground or floor on its side (vertically), as opposed to a desktop machine which sits on a desk (horizontally).

TRACK
A circular path on the disk. Tracks form a series of concentric rings on the disk surface where each ring is a separate ring.

TSR
Terminate and Stay Resident Software. Software which loads into RAM in the normal way, but doesn't release RAM memory when it has finished. It stays there to be called up at any time thereafter, usually by a special combination of keystrokes known as Hotkeys. Since it coexists with other software in memory it can be instantly accessible, but this can also cause difficulties.

UTILITY
A program used to perform common tasks such as formatting disks, sorting information, copying files or debugging programs.

VARIABLE
A data item with a label or *name*, that can be used by referring to the variable name instead of the literal value. The value of a variable may be changed during program execution if the program allows.

VGA
Video Graphics Array. A display standard for micro-computers. Also see **SVGA**.

VIRTUAL MEMORY
A facility used by system software to allocate part of eh hard disk area to be used in the same way as RAM to *fool* the computer into believing it has more physical RAM.

VIRTUAL REALITY
A form of *imaginary space* created in a computer. A computer generated world which allows interaction by wearing *gloves* and viewing by wearing a helmet. Suits are now in production which will provide a *virtual body* in the virtual world.

VISUAL DISPLAY UNIT
(Also known as VDU, screen, monitor, terminal, display)
Output device which displays the computer's output to the user on a screen in monochrome or colour. Although superficially like a television, the VDU's resolution is always better even though the screen is smaller. At any particular resolution, non-interlaced is better than interlaced.

WIMP
See **GRAPHICAL USER INTERFACE**

WINDOWS
A popular operating environment developed by Microsoft. It includes a set of programs using a Graphical Interface, which also allows other WINDOWS-compatible programs to be run within it. Also needs MS-DOS present in order to work.

WORDPROCESSOR
A software application which allows text to be stored, edited, corrected, manipulated, formatted and printed.

WRITE PROTECT
A method of preventing a diskette (or tape) being written on, while allowing it to be read as normal. When no write protect is in operation the disk (or tape) is said to be write enabled.

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Buyers' Guide

WELCOME to the *CD-ROM User* Buyers' Guide. Each month, we will feature a selection of the CD-ROM titles that you can buy. The prices shown here are the recommended retail prices. Where a company does not quote a recommended price, we have quoted a typical street price. While we make every effort to verify the prices shown before going to press, *CD-ROM User and* Paragon Publishing Ltd. cannot be held responsible for any errors, ommissions or changes in the market.

If in doubt, contact the supplier to verify the price before ordering. Next month's Buyers' Guide will include chickens and various root vegetables.

Encyclopedia and Reference

20th Century Almanac Mindscape	01444 246333	£79.99	Discover what happened *On This Day* in history
100 Classic Cars Andromeda Interactive	01235 529595	£44.06	A hundred photo images of classic cars on one CD
1994 Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia Mindscape	01444 246333	£139.00	For those who need truly comprehensive and in-depth information
A Line in the Sand BTL Publishing	01274 841320	£35.24	Chronicle of the Gulf War, with information on reports, weapons, etc
Adventures BTL Publishing	01274 841320	£45.83	Over 1000 adventures and unusual travel experiences throughout the world
America's Civil War Guildsoft	01752 895100	£52.82	Answers all the questions that anyone has on the Civil War
American History KimTec	01202 888873	£54.02	Information about the growth of the most powerful nation on Earth
American Visions KimTec	01202 888873	£67.56	Influences of the time, people, music and the world
American Vista KimTec	01202 888873	£40.50	Uses topographical maps, resource and industry maps from Hammond, Inc.
Americans in Space Kamco Computer Systems	01895 271919	£39.99	Over 500 narrated photos in vivid colour and 1 hour FMV
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Cinemania '94 Microsoft	01734 270001	£45.00	Generally regarded as the best database. Now with more multimedia content
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